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THE

WORKS

OF

THOMAS CHALMERS D. D.

MINISTER OF THE TRON CHURCH.

GLASGOW.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE contents of the first part of this volume form the substance of the article CHRISTIANITY, in the EDINBURGH ENCYCLOPÆDIA. Its appearance is due to the liberality of the Proprietors of that Work—nor did the Author conceive the purpose of presenting it to the world in another shape, till he was permitted and advised by them to republish it in a separate form. It is chiefly confined to the exposition of the historical argument for the truth of Christianity; and the aim of the Author is fulfilled if he has succeeded in proving the external testimony to be so sufficient, as to leave Infidelity without excuse, even though the remaining important branches of the Christian defence had been less strong and satisfactory than they are. "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness "of me." "And if I had not done the works among them "which none other man did, they had not had sin."

The Author is far from asserting the study of the historical evidence to be the only channel to a faith in the truth of Christianity. How could he, in the face of the obvious fact, that there are thousands and thousands of Christians, who bear the most undeniable marks of the truth having come home to their understanding "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power?" They have an evidence within themselves, which the world knoweth not, even the promised manifestations of the Saviour. This evidence is a "sign to them that believe;" but the Bible speaks also of a "sign to them which believe not;" and should it be effectual in reclaiming any of these from their infidelity, a mighty object is gained by the exhibition of it. Should it not be effectual, it will be to them "a savour of death unto death;" and this is one of the very effects ascribed to the proclamation of Christian truth in the first ages. If, even in the face of that

kind of evidence, which they have a relish and respect for, they still hold out against the reception of the Gospel, this must aggravate the weight of the threatening which lies upon them; "How shall they escape, if they neglect so great a salvation?"

It will be a great satisfaction to the writer of the following pages, if any shall rise from the perusal of them, with a stronger determination than before to take his Christianity exclusively from his Bible. It is not enough to entitle a man to the name of a Christian, that he professes to believe the Bible to be a genuine communication from God. To be the disciple of any book, he must do something more than satisfy himself that its contents are true—he must read the book—he must obtain a knowledge of the contents. And how many are there in the world, who do not call the truth of the Bible message in question, while they suffer it to lie beside them unopened, unread, and unattended to!

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EVIDENCES

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE PRINCIPLES OF HISTORICAL EVIDENCE, AND THEIR APPLICATION TO THE QUESTION OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

WERE a verbal communication to come to us from a person at a distance, there are two ways in which we might try to satisfy ourselves, that this was a true communication, and that there was no imposition in the affair. We might either sit in examination upon the substance of the message; and then from what we knew of the person from whom it professed to come, judge whether it was probable that such a message would be sent by him; or we may sit in examination upon the credibility of the messengers.

It is evident, that in carrying on the first examination, we might be subject to very great uncertainty. The professed author of the communication in question may live at such a distance from us, that we may never have it in our power to verify his message by any personal conversation with him. We may be so far ignorant of his character and designs, as to be unqualified to judge of the kind of communication that should proceed from him. To estimate aright the probable authenticity of the message from what we know of its author, would require an acquaintance with his plans, and views, and circumstances,

of which we may not be in possession. We may bring the greatest degree of sagacity to this investigation; but then the highest sagacity is of no avail, when there is an unsufficiency of data. Our ingenuity may be unbounded; but then we may want the materials. The principle which we assume may be untrue in itself, and therefore may be fallacious in its application.

Thus, we may derive very little light from our first argument. But there is still a second in reserve,—the credibility of the messengers. We may be no judges of the kind of communication which is natural, or likely to proceed from a person with whom we are but imperfectly acquainted; but we may be very competent judges of the degree of faith that is to be reposed in the bearers of that communication. We may know and appreciate the natural signs of veracity. There is a tone, and a manner characteristic of honesty, which may be both intelligible and convincing. There may be a concurrence of several messengers. There may be their substantial agreement. There may be the total want of any thing like concert or collusion among them. There may be their determined and unanimous perseverance, in spite of all the incredulity and all the opposition which they meet with. The subject of the communication may be most unpalatable to us; and we may be so unreasonable, as to wreak our unpleasant feeling upon the bearers of it. In this way, they may not only have no earthly interest to deceive us, but have the strongest inducement possible to abstain from insisting upon that message which they were charged to deliver. Last of all, as the conclusive seal of their authenticity, they may all agree in giving us a watchword, which we previously knew could be given by none but their master; and which none but his messengers could ever obtain the possession of. In this way, unfruitful as all our efforts may have been upon the first subject of examination, we may derive from the second the most decisive evidence, that the message in question is a real message, and was actually transmitted to us by its professed author.

Now, this consideration applies in all its parts to a message

from God. The argument for the truth of this message resolves itself into the same two topics of examination. We may sit in judgment upon the subject of the message; or we may sit in judgment upon the credibility of its bearers.

The first forms a great part of that argument for the truth of the Christian religion, which comes under the head of its *internal evidences*. The substance of the message is neither more nor less, than that particular scheme of the divine economy which is revealed to us in the New Testament; and the point of inquiry is, whether this scheme be consistent with that knowledge of God and his attributes which we are previously in possession of?

It appears to many, that no effectual argument can be founded upon this consideration, because they do not count themselves enough acquainted with the designs or character of the being from whom the message professes to have come. Were the author of the message some distant and unknown individual of our own species, we would scarcely be entitled to found an argument upon any comparison of ours, betwixt the import of the message and the character of the individual, even though we had our general experience of human nature to help us in the speculation. Now, of the invisible God, we have no experience whatever. We are still further removed from all direct and personal observation of him or of his counsels. Whether we think of the eternity of his government, or the mighty range of its influence over the wide departments of nature and providence he stands at such a distance from us, as to make the management of his empire a subject inaccessible to all our faculties.

It is evident, however, that this does not apply to the second topic of examination. The bearers of the message were beings like ourselves; and we can apply our safe and certain experience of man to their conduct and testimony. We may know too little of God, to found any argument upon the coincidence which we conceive to exist between the subject of the message and our previous conceptions of its author. But we may know enough of man to pronounce upon the credibility of the mes-

sengers. Had they the manner and physiognomy of honest men? Was their testimony resisted, and did they persevere in it? Had they any interest in fabricating the message; or did they suffer in consequence of this perseverance? Did they suffer to such a degree, as to constitute a satisfying pledge of their integrity? Was there more than one messenger, and did they agree as to the substance of that communication which they made to the world? Did they exhibit any special mark of their office as the messengers of God; such a mark as none but God could give, and none but his approved messengers could obtain the possession of? Was this mark the power of working miracles; and were these miracles; so obviously addressed to the senses, as to leave no suspicion of deceit behind them? These are questions which we feel our competency to take up, and to decide upon. They lie within the legitimate boundaries of human observation; and upon the solution of these do we rest the question of the truth of the Christian religion.

This, then, is the state of the question with those to whom the message was originally addressed. They had personal access to the messengers; and the evidences of their veracity lay before them. They were the eye and ear-witnesses of those facts, which occurred at the commencement of the Christian religion, and upon which its credibility rests. What met their observation must have been enough to satisfy them; but we live at the distance of nearly 2000 years, and is there enough to satisfy us? Those facts, which constitute the evidence for Christianity, might have been credible and convincing to them, if they really saw them; but is there any way by which they can be rendered credible and convincing to us, who only read of them? What is the expedient by which the knowledge and belief of the men of other times can be transmitted to posterity? Can we distinguish between a corrupt and a faithful transmission? Have we evidence before us, by which we can ascertain what was the belief of those to whom the message was first communicated? And can the belief which existed in their minds be derived to ours, by our sitting in judgment upon the reasons which preduced it?

The surest way in which the belief and knowledge of the men of former ages can be transmitted to their descendants, is through the medium of written testimony; and it is fortunate for us, that the records of the Christian religion are not the only historical documents which have come down to us. A great variety of information has come down to us in this way; and a great part of that information is as firmly believed, and as confidently proceeded upon, as if the thing narrated had happened within the limits of our eye-sight. No man doubts the invasion of Britain by Julius Cæsar; and no man doubts, therefore, that a conviction of the truth of past events may be fairly produced in the mind by the instrumentality of a written memorial. This is the kind of evidence which is chiefly appealed to for the truth of ancient history; and it is counted satisfying evidence for all that part of it, which is received and depended upon.

In laying before the reader, then, the evidence for the truth of Christianity, we do not call his mind to any singular or unprecedented exercise of its faculties. We call him to pronounce upon the credibility of written documents, which profess to have been published at a certain age, and by certain authors. The inquiry involves in it no principle which is not appealed to every day in questions of ordinary criticism. To sit in judgment on the credibility of a written document, is a frequent and familiar exercise of the understanding with literary men. It is fortunate for the human mind, when so interesting a question as its religious faith can be placed under the tribunal of such evidence as it is competent to pronounce upon. It was fortunate for those to whom Christianity (a professed communication from heaven) was first addressed, that they could decide upon the genuineness of the communication by such familiar and every-day principles, as the marks of truth or falsehood in the human bearers of that communication. And it is fortunate for us, that when, after that communication has assumed the form of a historical document, we can pronounce upon the degree of credit which should be attached to it, by the very same exercise of mind which we so confidently engage in, when sitting

in examination upon the other historical documents that have come down to us from antiquity.

If two historical documents possess equal degrees of evidence they should produce equal degrees of conviction. But if the object of the one be to establish some fact connected with our religious faith, while the object of the other is to establish some fact, about which we feel no other interest, than that general curiosity which is gratified by the solution of any question in literature, this difference in the object produces a difference of effect in the feelings and tendencies of the mind. It is impossible for the mind, while it inquires into the evidence of a christian document, to abstain from all reference to the important conclusion of the inquiry. And this will necessarily mingle its influence with the arguments which engage its attention. It may be of importance to attend to the peculiar feelings which are thus given to the investigation, and in how far they have affected the impression of the Christian argument.

We know it to be the opinion of some, that in this way an undue advantage has been given to that argument. Instead of a pure question of truth, it has been made a question of sentiment and the wishes of the heart have mingled with the exercises of the understanding. There is a class of men who may feel disposed to overrate it evidences, because they are anxious to give every support and stability to a system, which they conceive to be most intimately connected with the dearest hopes and wishes of humanity; because their imagination is carried away by the sublimity of its doctrines, or their heart engaged by that amiable morality which is so much calculated to improve and adorn the face of society.

Now we are ready to admit, that as the object of the inquiry is not the character, but the truth of Christianity, the philosopher should be careful to protect his mind from the delusion of its charms. He should separate the exercises of the understanding from the tendencies of the fancy or of the heart. He should be prepared to follow the light of evidence, though it may lead him to conclusions the most painful and melancholy. He should train his mind to all the hardihood of abstract and

unfeeling intelligence. He should give up every thing to the supremacy of argument, and be able to renounce, without a sigh, all the tenderest possessions of infancy, the moment that truth demands of him the sacrifice. Let it be remembered, however, that while one species of prejudice operates in favour of Christianity, another prejudice operates against it. There is a class of men who are repelled from the investigation of its evidences, because in their minds Christianity is allied with the weakness of superstition; and they feel that they are descending when they bring down their attention to a subject which engrosses so much respect and admiration from the vulgar.

It appears to us, that the peculiar feeling which the sacredness of the subject gives to the inquirer, is, upon the whole, unfavourable to the impression of the Christian argument. Had the subject not been sacred, and had the same testimony been given to the facts that are connected with it, we are satisfied, that the history of Jesus in the New Testament would have been looked upon as the best supported by evidence of any history that has come down to us. It would assist us in appreciating the evidence for the truth of the gospel history, if we could conceive for a moment, that Jesus, instead of being the founder of a new religion, had been merely the founder of a new school of philosophy, and that the different histories which have come down to us had merely represented him as an extraordinary person, who had rendered himself illustrious among his countrymen by the wisdom of his sayings, and the beneficence of his actions. We venture to say, that had this been the case, a tenth part of the testimony which has actually been given, would have been enough to satisfy us. Had it been a question of mere erudition, where neither a predilection in favour of a religion, nor an antipathy against it, could have impressed a bias in any one direction, the testimony, both in weight and in quantity, would have been looked upon as quite unexampled in the whole compass of ancient literature.

To form a fair estimate of the strength and decisiveness of the Christian argument, we should, if possible, divest ourselves of all reference to religion, and view the truth of the gospel his-

tory, purely as a question of erudition. If at the outset of the investigation we have a prejudice against the Christian religion, the effect is obvious; and without any refinement of explanation, we see at once how such a prejudice must dispose us to annex suspicion and distrust to the testimony of the Christian writers. But even when the prejudice is on the side of Christianity, the effect is unfavourable on a mind that is at all scrupulous about the rectitude of its opinions. In these circumstances, the mind gets suspicious of itself. It feels a predilection, and becomes apprehensive lest this predilection may have disposed it to cherish a particular conclusion, independently of the evidences by which it is supported. Were it a mere speculative question, in which the interests of man, and the attachments of his heart had no share, he would feel greater confidence in the result of his investigation. But it is difficult to separate the moral impressions of piety, and it is no less difficult to calculate their precise influence on the exercises of the understanding. In the complex sentiment of attachment and conviction, which he annexes to the Christian religion, he finds it difficult to say, how much is due to the tendencies of the heart, and how much is due to the pure and unmingled influence of argument. His very anxiety for the truth, disposes him to overrate the circumstances which give a bias to his understanding, and through the whole process of the inquiry, he feels a suspicion and an embarrassment, which he would not have felt, had it been a question of ordinary erudition.

The same suspicion which he attaches to himself, he will be ready to attach to all whom he conceives to be in similar circumstances. Now, every author who writes in defence of Christianity; is supposed to be a christian and this, in spite of every argument to the contrary, has the actual effect of weakening the impression of his testimony. This suspicion effects, in a more remarkable degree, the testimony of the first writers on the side of Christianity. In opposition to it, you have no doubt, to allege the circumstances under which the testimony was given; the tone of sincerity which runs through the performance of the author; the concurrence of other testimonies; the persecutions which

were sustained in adhering to them, and which can be accounted for on no other principle, than the power of conscience and conviction; and the utter impossibility of imposing a false testimony on the world, had they even been disposed to do it. Still there is a lurking suspicion, which often survives this strength all of argument, and which it is difficult to get rid of, even after it has been demonstrated to be completely unreasonable. He is a Christian. He is one of the party. Am I an infidel? I persist in distrusting the testimony. Am I a Christian? I rejoice in the strength of it; but this very joy becomes matter of suspicion to a scrupulous inquirer. He feels something more than the concurrence of his belief in the testimony of the writer. He catches the infection of his piety and his moral sentiments. In addition to the acquiescence of the understanding, there is a *con amore* feeling both in himself, and in his author, which he had rather been without, because he finds it difficult to compute the precise amount of its influence; and the consideration of this restrains him from that clear and decided conclusion, which he would infallibly have landed in, had it been purely a secular investigation.

There is something in the very sacredness of the subject, which intimidates the understanding, and restrains it from making the same firm and confident application of its faculties, which it would have felt itself perfectly warranted to do, had it been a question of ordinary history. Had the apostles been the disciples of some eminent philosopher, and the fathers of the church, their immediate successors in the office of presiding over the discipline and instruction of the numerous schools which they had established, this would have given a secular complexion to the argument, which we think would have been more satisfying to the mind, and have impressed upon it a closer and more familiar conviction of the history in question. We should have immediately brought it into comparison with the history of other philosophers, and could not have failed to recognize, that, in minuteness of information, in weight and quantity of evidence, in the concurrence of numerous and independent testimonies, and in the total absence of every circumstance that should dispose us to annex suspicion to the account which lay before us,

it far surpassed any thing that had come down to us from antiquity. It so happens, however, that, instead of being the history of a philosopher, it is the history of a prophet. The veneration we annex to the sacredness of such a character, mingles with our belief in the truth of his history. From a question of simple truth, it becomes a question in which the heart is interested; and the subject from that moment assumes a certain holiness and mystery, which veil the strength of the argument, and takes off from that familiar and intimate conviction which we annex to the far less authenticated histories of profane authors.

It may be further observed, that every part of the Christian argument has been made to undergo a most severe scrutiny. The same degree of evidence which in questions of ordinary history commands the easy and universal acquiescence of every inquirer, has, in the subject before us, been taken most thoroughly to pieces, and pursued, both by friends and enemies, into all its ramifications. The effect of this is unquestionable. The genuineness and authenticity of the profane historian, are admitted upon much inferior evidence to what we can adduce for the different pieces which make up the New Testament; And why? Because the evidence has been hitherto thought sufficient, and the genuineness and authenticity have never been questioned. Not so with the Gospel history. Though its evidence is precisely the same in kind, and vastly superior in degree to the evidence for the history of the profane writer, its evidence has been questioned, and the very circumstance of its being questioned has annexed a suspicion to it. At all points of the question, there has been a struggle and a controversy. Every ignorant objection, and every rash and petulant observation, has been taken up and commented upon by the defenders of Christianity. There has at last been so much said about it, that a general feeling of insecurity is apt to accompany the whole investigation. There has been so much fighting, that Christianity now is looked upon as debatable ground. Other books, where the evidence is much inferior, but which have had the advantage of never being questioned, are received as of established authority. It is striking to observe the perfect confi-

dence with which an infidel will quote a passage from an ancient historian. He perhaps does not overrate the credit due to him. But present him with a tabellated and comparative view of all the evidences that can be adduced for the gospel of Matthew, and any profane historian, which he chooses to fix upon, and let each distinct evidence be discussed upon no other principle than the ordinary and approved principles of criticism, we assure him that the sacred history would far outweigh the profane in the number and value of its testimonies.

In illustration of the above remarks, we can refer to the experience of those who have attended to this examination. We ask them to recollect the satisfaction which they felt, when they came to those parts of the examination, where the argument assumes a secular complexion. Let us take the testimony of Tacitus for an example. He asserts the execution of our Saviour in the reign of Tiberius, and under the procuratorship of Pilate; the temporary check, which this gave to his religion; its revival, and the progress it had made, not only over Judea, but to the city of Rome. Now all this is attested in the Annals of Tacitus. But it is also attested in a far more direct and circumstantial manner in the annals of another author, in a book entitled the *History of the Acts of the Apostles by the Evangelist Luke*. Both of these performances carry on the very face of them the appearance of unsuspicious and well-authenticated documents. But there are several circumstances, in which the testimony of Luke possesses a decided advantage over the testmony of Tacitus. He was the companion of these very apostles. He was an eye witness to many of the events recorded by him. He had the advantage over the Roman historian in time and in place, and in personal knowledge of many of the circumstances in his history. The genuineness of his publication, too, and the time of its appearance, are far better established, and by precisely that kind of argument which is held decisive in every other question of erudition. Besides all this, we have the testimony of at least five of the Christian fathers, all of whom had the same, or a greater, advantage in point of time than Tacitus, and who had a much nearer and readier ac-

cess to original sources of information. Now, how comes it that the testimony of Tacitus, a distant and later historian, should yield such delight and satisfaction to the inquirer, while all the antecedent testimony (which, by every principle of approved criticism, is much stronger than the other) should produce an impression that is comparatively languid and ineffectual? It is owing in a great measure, to the principle to which we have already alluded. There is a sacredness annexed to the subject, so long as it is under the pen of fathers and evangelists, and this very sacredness takes away from the freedom and confidence of the argument. The moment that it is taken up by a profane author, the spell which held the understanding in some degree of restraint is dissipated. We now tread on the more familiar ground of ordinary history; and the evidence for the truth of the Gospel appears more assimilated to that evidence, which brings home to our conviction the particulars of the Greek and Roman story.

To say that Tacitus was upon this subject a disinterested historian, is not enough to explain the preference which you give to his testimony. There is no subject in which the triumph of the Christian argument is more conspicuous, than the moral qualifications which give credit to the testimony of its witnesses. We have every possible evidence, that there could be neither mistake nor falsehood in their testimony; a much greater quantity of evidence, indeed, than can actually be produced to establish the credibility of any other historian. Now all we ask is, that where an exception to the veracity of any historian is removed, you restore him to that degree of credit and influence which he ought to have possessed, had no such exception been made. In no case has an exception to the credibility of an author been more triumphantly removed, than in the case of the early Christian writers; and yet, as a proof that there really exists some such delusion as we have been labouring to demonstrate, though our eyes are perfectly open to the integrity of the Christian witnesses, there is still a disposition to give the preference to the secular historian. When Tacitus is placed by the side of the evangelist Luke, even after the decisive argument, which

establishes the credit of the latter historian has convinced the understanding, there remains a tendency in the mind to annex a confidence to the account of the Roman writer, which is altogether disproportioned to the relative merits of his testimony.

Let us suppose, for the sake of farther illustration, that Tacitus had included some more particulars in his testimony, and that, in addition to the execution of our Saviour, he had asserted, in round and unqualified terms, that this said Christus had risen from the dead, and was seen alive by some hundreds of his acquaintances. Even this would not have silenced altogether the cavils of enemies, but it would have reclaimed many an infidel; been exulted in by many a sincere Christian; and made to occupy a foremost place in many a book upon the evidences of our religion. Are we to forget all the while, that we are in actual possession of much stronger testimony? that we have the concurrence of eight or ten contemporary authors, most of whom had actually seen Christ after the great event of his resurrection? that the veracity of these authors, and the genuineness of their respective publications, are established on grounds much stronger than have ever been alleged in behalf of Tacitus, or any ancient author? Whence this unaccountable preference of Tacitus? Upon every received principle of criticism, we are bound to annex greater confidence to the testimony of the apostles. It is vain to recur to the imputation of its being an interested testimony. This the apologists for Christianity undertake to disprove, and actually have disproved it, and that by a much greater quantity of evidence than would be held perfectly decisive in a question of common history. If after this there should remain any lurking sentiment of diffidence or suspicion, it is entirely resolvable into some such principle as I have already alluded to. It is to be treated as a mere feeling, —a delusion which should not be admitted to have any influence on the convictions of the understanding.

The principle which we have been attempting to expose, is found, in fact, to run through every part of the argument, and to accompany the inquirer through all the branches of the investigation. The authenticity of the different books of the New

Testament forms a very important inquiry, wherein the object of the Christian Apologist is to prove, that they were really written by their professed authors. In proof of this, there is an uninterrupted series of testimony from the days of the apostles; and it was not to be expected, that a point so isoteric to the Christian society could have attracted the attention of profane authors, till the religion of Jesus, by its progress in the world, had rendered itself conspicuous. It is not then till about eighty years after the publication of the different pieces, that we meet with the testimony of Celsus, an avowed enemy to Christianity, and who asserts, upon the strength of its general notoriety, that the historical parts of the New Testament were written by the disciples of our Saviour. This is very decisive evidence. But how does it happen, that it should throw a clearer gleam of light and satisfaction over the mind of the inquirer, than he had yet experienced in the whole train of his investigation? Whence that disposition to underrate the antecedent testimony of the Christian writers? Talk not of theirs being an interested testimony; for, in point of fact, the same disposition operates, after reason is convinced that the suspicion is totally unfounded. What we contend for is, that this indifference to the testimony of the Christian writers implies a dereliction of principles, which apply with the utmost confidence to all similar inquiries.

The effects of this same principle are perfectly discernible in the writings of even our most judicious apologists. We offer no reflection against the assiduous Lardner, who, in his credibility of the Gospel history, presents us with a collection of testimonies which should make every Christian proud of his religion. In his evidence for the authenticity of the different pieces which make up the New Testament, he begins with the oldest of the fathers, some of whom were the intimate companions of the original writers. According to our view of the matter, he should have dated the commencement of his argument from a higher point, and begun with the testimonies of these original writers to one another. In the second Epistle of Peter, there is a distinct reference made to the writings of Paul; and in the

Acts of the Apostles, there is a reference made to one of the four Gospels. Had Peter, instead of being an apostle, ranked only with the fathers of the church, and had his epistle not been admitted into the canon of scripture, this testimony of his would have had a place in the catalogue, and been counted peculiarly valuable, both for its precision and its antiquity. There is certainly nothing in the estimation he enjoyed, or in the circumstances of his epistle being bound up with the other books of the New Testament, which ought to impair the credit of his testimony. But in effect, his testimony does make a weaker impression on the mind, than a similar testimony from Barnabas, or Clement, or Polycarp. It certainly ought not to do it, and there is a delusion in the preference that is thus given to the latter writers. It is in fact, another example of the principle which we have been so often insisting upon. What profane authors are in reference to Christian authors at large, the fathers of the church are in reference to the original writers of the New Testament. In contradiction to every approved principle, we prefer the distant and later testimony, to the testimony of writers, who carry as much evidence and legitimate authority along with them, and who only differ from others in being nearer the original source of information. We neglect and undervalue the evidence which the New Testament itself furnishes, and rest the whole of the argument upon the external and superinduced testimony of subsequent authors.

A great deal of all this is owing to the manner in which the defence of Christianity has been conducted by its friends and supporters. They have given too much into the suspicions of the opposite party. They have yielded their minds to the infection of their scepticism, and maintained, through the whole process, a caution and a delicacy which they often carry to a degree that is excessive; and by which, in fact, they have done injustice to their own arguments. Some of them begin with the testimony of Tacitus as a first principle, and pursue the investigation upwards, as if the evidence that we collect from the annals of the Roman historian were stronger than that of the Christian writers who flourished nearer the scene of the inves-

tigation, and whose credibility can be established on grounds which are altogether independent of his testimony. In this way, they come at last to the credibility of the New Testament writers, but by a lengthened and circuitous procedure. The reader feels as if the argument were diluted at every step in the process of derivation, and his faith in the Gospel history is much weaker than his faith in histories that are far less authenticated. Bring Tacitus and the New Testament to an immediate comparison, and subject them both to the touchstone of ordinary and received principles, and it will be found that the latter leaves the former out of sight in all the marks, and characters, and evidences of an authentic history. The truth of the Gospel stands on a much firmer and more independent footing, than many of its defenders would dare to give us any conception of. They want that boldness of argument which the merits of the question entitle them to assume. They ought to maintain a more decided front to their adversaries, and tell them, that, in the New Testament itself—in the concurrence of its numerous, and distant, and independent authors—in the uncontradicted authority which it has maintained from the earliest times of the church—in the total inability of the bitterest adversaries of our religion to impeach its credibility—in the genuine characters of honesty and fairness which it carries on the very face of it; that in these, and in every thing else, which can give validity to the written history of past times, there is a weight and a splendour of evidence, which the testimony of Tacitus cannot confirm, and which the absence of that testimony could not have diminished.

If it were necessary in a court of justice to ascertain the circumstances of a certain transaction which happened in a particular neighbourhood, the obvious expedient would be to examine the agents and the eye-witnesses of that transaction. If six or eight concurred in giving the same testimony—if there was no appearance of collusion amongst them—if they had the manner and aspect of creditable men—above all, if this testimony were made public, and not a single individual, from the numerous spectators of the transction alluded to, step forward to falsi-

fy it, then, we apprehend, the proof would be looked upon as complete. Other witnesses might be summoned from a distance to give in their testimony, not of what they saw, but of what they heard upon the subject; but their concurrence, though a happy enough circumstance, would never be looked upon as any material addition to the evidence already brought forward. Another court of justice might be held in a distant country, and years after the death of the original witnesses. It might have occasion to verify the same transaction, and for this purpose might call in the only evidence which it was capable of collecting—the testimony of men who lived after the transaction in question, and at a great distance from the place where it happened. There would be no hesitation, in ordinary cases, about the relative value of the two testimonies; and the record of the first court could be appealed to by posterity as by far the more valuable document, and far more decisive of the point in controversy. Now, what we complain of, is, that in the instance before us this principle is reversed. The report of hearsay witnesses is held in higher estimation than the report of the original agents and spectators. The most implicit credit is given to the testimony of the distant and later historians, and the testimony of the original witnesses is received with as much distrust as if they carried the marks of villany and imposture upon their foreheads. The genuineness of the first record can be established by a much greater weight and variety of evidence, than the genuineness of the second. Yet all the suspicion that we feel upon this subject annexes to the former; and the apostles and evangelists, with every evidence in their favour which it is in the power of testimony to furnish, are, in fact, degraded from the place which they ought to occupy among the accredited historians of past times.

The above observations may help to prepare the inquirer for forming a just and impartial estimate of the merits of the Christian testimony. His great object should be to guard against every bias of the understanding. The general idea is, that a predilection in favour of Christianity may lead him to overrate the argument. We believe that if every unfair tendency of the

mind could be subjected to a rigorous computation, it would be found, that the combined operation of them all has the effect of impressing a bias in a contrary direction. All we wish for, is, that the arguments which are held decisive in other historical questions, should not be looked upon as nugatory when applied to the investigation of those facts which are connected with the truth and establishment of the Christian religion, that every prepossession should be swept away, and room left for the understanding, to expatiate without fear, and without incumbrance.

CHAP. II.

ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE DIFFERENT BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE argument for the truth of the different facts recorded in the gospel history, resolves itself into four parts. In the first, it shall be our object to prove, that the different pieces which make up the New Testament, were written by the authors whose names they bear, and the age which is commonly assigned to them. In the second, we shall exhibit the internal marks of truth and honesty, which may be gathered from the compositions themselves. In the third, we shall press upon the reader the known situation and history of the authors, as satisfying proofs of the veracity with which they delivered themselves. And, in the fourth, we shall lay before them the additional and subsequent testimonies, by which the narrative of the original writers is supported.

In every point of the investigation, we shall meet with examples of the principle which we have already alluded to. We have said, that if two distinct inquiries be set on foot, where the object of the one is to settle some point of sacred history, and the object of the other is to settle some point of profane history; the mind acquiesces in a much smaller quantity of evidence in the latter case than it does in the former. If this be right, (and to a certain degree it undoubtedly is,) then it is incumbent on the defender of Christianity to bring forward a greater quantity of evidence than would be deemed sufficient in a question of common literature, and to demand the acquiescence of his reader upon the strength of this superior evidence. If it be not right beyond a certain degree—and if there be a tendency in the mind to carry it beyond that degree, then this tendency is founded upon a delusion, and it is well

that the reader should be apprised of its existence, that he may protect himself from its influence. The superior quantity of evidence which we can bring forward, will, in this case, all go to augment the positive effect upon his convictions; and he will rejoice to perceive that he is far safer in believing what has been handed down to him of the history of Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of his apostles, than in believing what he has never doubted—the history of Alexander, and the doctrine of Socrates. Could all the marks of veracity, and the list of subsequent testimonies, be exhibited to the eye of the reader in parallel columns, it would enable him, at one glance, to form a complete estimate. We shall have occasion to call his attention to this so often, that we may appear to many of our readers to have expatiated upon our introductory principle to a degree that is tiresome and unnecessary. We conceive, however, that it is the best and most perspicuous way of putting the argument.

I. The different pieces which make up the New Testament, were written by the authors whose names they bear, and at the time which is commonly assigned to them.

After the long slumber of the middle ages, the curiosity of the human mind was awakened, and felt its attention powerfully directed to those old writings, which have survived the waste of so many centuries. It were a curious speculation to ascertain the precise quantity of evidence which lay in the information of these old documents. And it may help us in our estimate, first to suppose, that in the researches of that period, there was only one composition found which professed to be a narrative of past times. A number of circumstances can be assigned, which might give a certain degree of probability to the information even of this solitary and unsupported document. There is, first, the general consideration, that the principle upon which a man feels himself induced to write a true history, is of more frequent and powerful operation, than the principle upon which a man feels himself induced to offer a false or a disguised representation of facts to the world. This affords a general probability on the side of the document in

question being a true narrative; and there may be some particulars connected with the appearance of the performance itself, which might strengthen this probability. We may not be able to discover in the story itself any inducement which the man could have in publishing it, if it were mainly and substantially false. We might see an expression of honesty, which it is in the power of written language, as well as of spoken language, to convey. We might see that there was nothing monstrous or improbable in the narrative itself. And, without enumerating every particular calculated to give it the impression of truth, we may, in the progress of our inquiries, have ascertained, that copies of this manuscript were to be found in many places, and in different parts of the world, proving, by the evidence of its diffusion, the general esteem in which it was held by the readers of past ages. This gives us the testimony of these readers to the value of the performance; and as we are supposing it is a history, and not a work of imagination, it could only be valued on the principle of the information which was laid before them being true. In this way a solitary document, transmitted to us from a remote antiquity, might gain credit in the world, though it had been lost sight of for many ages, and only brought to light by the revival of a literary spirit, which had lain dormant during a long period of history.

We can further suppose, that in the progress of these researches, another manuscript was discovered, having the same characters, and possessing the same separate and original marks of truth with the former. If they both touched upon the same period of history, and gave testimony to the same events, it is plain that a stronger evidence for the truth of these events would be afforded, than what it was in the power of either of the testimonies taken separately to supply. The separate circumstances which gave a distinct credibility to each of the testimonies are added together, and give a so much higher credibility to those points of information upon which they deliver a common testimony. This is the case when the testimonies carry in them the appearance of being independent of one another. And even when the one is derived from the other, it still affords an

accession to the evidence; because the author of the subsequent testimony gives us the distinct assertion, that he believed in the truth of the original testimony.

The evidence may be strengthened still farther, by the accession of a third manuscript, and a third testimony. All the separate circumstances which confer credibility upon any one document, even though it stands alone and unsupported by any other, combine themsselves into a much stronger body of evidence, when we have obtained the concurrence of several. If, even in the case of a single narrative, a probability lies on the side of its being true, from the multitude and diffusion of copies, and from the air of truth and honesty discernible in the composition itself, the probability is heightened by the coincidence of several narratives, all of them possessing the same claims upon our belief. If it be improbable that one should be written for the purpose of imposing a falsehood upon the world, it is still more improbable that many should be written, all of them conspiring to the same perverse and unnatural object. No one can doubt, at least, that of the multitude of written testimonies which have come down to us, the true must greatly preponderate over the false; and that the deceitful principle, though it exists sometimes, could never operate to such an extent, as to carry any great or general imposititon in the face of all the documents which are before us. The supposition must he extended much farther than we have yet carried it, before we reach the degree of evidence and of testimony, of which, on many points of ancient history, we are at this moment in actual possession. Many documents have been collected, professing to be written at different times, and by men of different countries. In this way a great body of ancient literature has been formed, from which we can collect many points of evidence, too tedious to enumerate. Do we find the express concurrence of several authors to the same piece of history? Do we find, what is still more impressive, events formally announced in one narrative, not told over again, but implied and proceeded upon as true in another? Do we find the succession of history, through a series of ages, supported in a way that is

natural and consistent? Do we find those compositions which profess a higher antiquity, appealed to by those which profess a lower? These, and a number of other points, which meet every scholar who betakes himself to the actual investigation, give a most warm and living character of reality to the history of past times. There is a perversity of mind which may resist all this. There is no end to the fancies of scepticism. We may plead in vain the number of written testimonies, their artless coincidence, and the perfect undesignedness of manner by which they often supply the circumstances that serve both to guide and satisfy the inquirer, and to throw light and support upon one another. The infidel will still have something, behind which he can entrench himself; and his last supposition, monstrous and unnatural as it is, may be, that the whole of written history is a laborious fabrication, sustained for many ages, and concurred in by many individuals, with no other purpose than to enjoy the anticipated blunders of the men of future times, whom they had combined with so much dexterity to bewilder and lead astray.

If it were possible to summon up to the presence of the mind the whole mass of spoken testimony, it would be found, that what was false bore a very small proportion to what was true. For many obvious reasons, the proportion of the false to the true must be also small in written testimony. Yet instances of falsehood occur in both; and the actual ability to separate the false from the true in written history, proves that historical evidence has its principles and its probabilities to go upon. There may be the natural signs of dishonesty. There may be the wildness and improbability of the narrative. There may be a total want of agreement on the part of other documents. There may be the silence of every author for ages after the pretended date of the manucript in question. There may be all these, in sufficient abundance, to convict the manuscript of forgery and falsehood. This has actually been done in several instances. The skill and discernment of the human mind upon the subject of historical evidence, have been improved by the exercise. The few cases in which sentence of condemnation has been

given, are so many testimonies to the competency of the tribunal which has sat in judgment over them, and give a stability to their verdict, when any document is approved of. It is a peculiar subject, and the men who stand at a distance from it may multiply their suspicions and their scepticism at pleasure; but no intelligent man ever entered into the details, without feeling the most familiar and satisfying conviction of that credit and confidence which it is in the power of historical evidence to bestow.

Now, to apply this to the object of our present division, which is to ascertain the age of the document, and the person who is the author of it. These are points of information which may be collected from the performance itself. They may be found in the body of the composition, or they may be more formally announced in the title page—and every time that the book is referred to by its title, or the name of the author and age of the publication are announced in any other document that has come down to us, these points of information receive additional proof from the testimony of subsequent writers.

The New Testament is bound up in one volume, but we would be underrating its evidence if we regarded it only as one testimony, and that the truth of the facts recorded in it rested upon the testimony of one historian. It is not one publication, but a collection of several publications, which are ascribed to different authors, and made their first appearance in different parts of the world. To fix the date of their appearance, it is necessary to institute a separate inquiry for each publication; and it is the unexcepted testimony of all subseqent writers, that two of the Gospels and several of the Epistles, were written by the immediate disciples of our Saviour, and published in their lifetime. Celsus, an enemy of the Christian faith, refers to the affairs of Jesus as written by his disciples. He never thinks of disputing the fact; and from the extracts which he makes for the purpose of criticism, there can be no doubt in the mind of the reader, that it is one or other of the four Gospels to which he refers. The single testimony of Celsus may be considered as decisive of the fact, that the story of Jesus and of his life

was actually written by his disciples. Celsus writes about a hundred years after the alledged time of the publication of this story; but that it was written by the companions of this Jesus, is a fact which he never thinks of disputing. He takes it up upon the strength of its general notorlety, and the whole history of that period furnishes nothing that can attach any doubt or suspicion to this circumstance. Referring to a principle already taken notice of, had it been the history of a philosopher instead of a prophet, its authenticity would have been admitted without any formal testimony to that effect. It would have been admitted so to speak, upon the mere existence of the title-page, combined with this circumstance, that the whole course of history or tradition does not furnish us with a single fact, leading us to believe that the correctness of this title-page was ever questioned. It would have been admitted, not because it was asserted by subsequent writers, but because they made no assertion upon the subject, because they never thought of converting it into a matter of discussion, and because their occasional references to the book in question would be looked upon as carrying in them a tacit acknowledgment, that it was the very same book which it professed to be at the present day. The distinct assertion of Celsus that the pieces in question were writtten by the companions of Jesus though even at the distance of a hundred years, is an argument in favour of their authenticity, which cannot be alleged for many of the most esteemed compositions of antiquity. It is the addition of a formal testimony to that kind of general evidence, which is founded upon the tacit or implied concurrence of subsequent writers, and which is held to be perfectly decisive in similar cases.

Had the pieces, which make up the New Testament, been the only documents of past times, the mere existence of a pretension to such an age, and to such an author, resting on their own information, would have been sustained as a certain degree of evidence, that the real age and the real author had been assigned to them. But we have the testimony of subsequent authors to the same effect; and it is to be remarked, that it is by far the most crowded, and the most closely sustained series of testimonies, of which we have any example in the

whole field of ancient history. When we assigned the testimony of Celsus, it is not to be supposed that this is the very first which occurs after the days of the apostles. The blank of a hundred years betwixt the publication of the original story and the publication of Celsus, is filled up by antecedent testimonies, which in all fairness, should be counted more decisive of the point in question. They are the testimonies of Christian writers, and, in as far as a nearer opportunity of obtaining correct information is concerned, they should be held more valuable than the testimony of Celsus. These references are of three kinds:—*First* In some cases, their reference to the books of the New Testament is made in the form of an express quotation, and the author particularly named. *Secondly*, In other cases, the quotation is made without reference to the particular author, and ushered in by the general words, "*as it is written.*" And, *Thirdly*, There are innumerable allusions to the different parts of the New Testament, scattered over all the writings of the earlier fathers. In this last case there is no express citation; but we have the sentiment, the turn of expression, the very words of the New Testament, repeated so often, and by such a number of different writers, as to leave no doubt upon the mind, that they were copied from one common original, which was at that period held in high reverence and estimation. In pursuing the train of references, we do not meet with a single chasm from the days of the original writers. Not to repeat what we have already made some allusion to, the testimonies of the original writers to one another, we proceed to assert, that some of the fathers, whose writings have come down to us, were the companions of the apostles, and are even named in the books of the New Testament. St. Clement, bishop of Rome, is, with the concurrence of all ancient authors, the same whom Paul mentions in his epistle to the Philippians. In his epistle to the church of Corinth, which was written in the name of the whole church of Rome, he refers to the first epistle of Paul to the former church. "Take into your hands the epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle." He then makes a quotation, which is to be found in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. Could Clement have done this to the Corinthians themselves,

had no such epistle been in existance? And is not this an undoubted testimony, not merely from the mouth of Clement, but on the part of the churches both of Rome and Corinth, to the authenticity of such an epistle? There are in this same epistle of Clement several quotations of the second kind, which confirm the existence of some other books of the New Testament; and a multitude of allusions or references of the third kind, to the writings of the evangelist, the Acts of the Apostles, and a great many of those epistles which have been admitted into the New Testament. We have similar testimonies from some more of the fathers, who lived and conversed with Jesus Christ. Besides many references of the second and third kind, we have also other instances of the same kind of testimony, which Clement gave to St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, than which nothing can be conceived more indisputable. Ignatius, writing to the church of Ephesus, takes notice of St. Paul's epistle to that church; and Polycarp, an immediate disciple of the apostles, makes the same express reference to St Paul's epistle to the Philippians in a letter addressed to the people. In carrying our attention down from the apostolical fathers, we follow an uninterrupted series of testimonies to the authenticity of the canonical scriptures. They get more numerous and circumstancial as we proceed—a thing to be expected from the progress of Christianity, and the greater multitude of writers, who came forward in its defence and illustration.

In pursuing the series of writers from the days of the apostles down to about 150 years after the publication of the pieces which make up the New Testament, we come to Tertullian, of whom Lardner says, "that there are perhaps more and longer quotations of the small volume of the New Testament in this one Christian author, than of all the works of Cicero, though of so uncommon excellence for thought and style, in the writers of all characters for several ages."

We feel ourselves exposed, in this part of our investigation, to the suspicion which adheres to every Christian testimony. We have already made some attempts to analyse that suspicion into its ingredients, and we conceive, that the circumstance of the Christians being an interested party, is only one, and not perhaps the principal of these ingredients. At all events, this

may be the proper place for disposing of that one ingredient, and for offering a few general observations on the strength of the Christian testimony.

In estimating the value of any testimony, there are two distinct subjects of consideration; the person who gives the testimony and the people to whom the testimony is addressed. It is quite needless to enlarge on the resources which, in the present instance, we derive from both these considerations, and how much each of them contributes to the triumph and solidity of the Christian argument. In as far as the people, who give the testimony are concerned, how could they be mistaken in their account of the New Testament, when some of them lived in the same age with the original writers, and were their intimate acquaintances, and when all of them had the benefit of an uncontrolled series of evidence, reaching down from the date of the earliest publications to their own times? Or, how can we suspect that they falsified, when there runs through their writings the same tone of plainness and sincerity, which is allowed to stamp the character of authenticity on other productions; and, above all, when, upon the strength even of heathen testimony, we conclude, that many of them, by their sufferings and death, gave the highest evidence that man can give, of his speaking under the influence of a real and honest conviction? In as far as the people who received the testimony are concerned, to what other circumstances can we ascribe their concurrence, than to the truth of that testimony? In what way was it possible to deceive them upon a point of general notoriety? The books of the New Testament are referred to by the ancient fathers, as writings generally known and respected by the Christians of that period. If they were obscure writings, or had no existence at the time, how can we account for the credit and authority of those fathers who appealed to them, and had the effrontery to insult their fellow Christians by a falsehood so palpable, and so easily detected? Allow them to be capable of this treachery, we have still to explain, how the people came to be the dupes of so glaring an imposition; how they could be persuaded to give up every thing for a religion, whose teachers were so unprincipled as to deceive them, and so unwise as to commit themselves upon ground where it was

impossible to elude discovery. Could Clement have dared to refer the people of Corinth to an Epistle said to be received by themselves, and which had no existence? or, could he have referred the Christians at large to writings which they never heard of. And it was not enough to maintain the semblance of truth with the people of their own party.

Where were the Jews all the time? and how was it possible to escape the correction of these keen and vigilant observers? We mistake the matter much, if we think, that Christianity at that time was making its insiduous way in silence and in secrecy, through a listless and unconcerned public. All history gives an opposite representation. The passions and curiosity of men were quite upon the alert. The popular enthusiasm had been excited on both sides of the question. It had drawn the attention of established authorities in different provinces of the empire, and the merits of the Christian cause had become a matter of frequent and formal discussion in courts of judicature. If, in these circumstances, the Christian writers had the hardihood to venture upon a falsehood, it would have been upon safer ground than what they actually adopted. They would never have hazarded to assert what was so open to contradiction, as the existence of books held in reverence among all the churches, and which nobody either in or out of these churches ever heard of. They would never have been so unwise as to commit in this way a cause, which had not a single circumstance to recommend it but its truth and its evidences.

The falsehood of the Christian testimony on this point, would carry along with it a concurrence of circumstances, each of which is the strangest and most unprecedented that ever was heard of. First, That men, who sustained in their writings all the characters of sincerity, and many of whom submitted to martyrdom, as the highest pledge of sincerity which can possibly be given, should have been capable of falsehood at all. Second, That this tendency to falsehood should have been exercised so unwisely as to appear in an assertion perfectly open to detection, and which could be so readily converted to the discredit of that religion, which it was the favourite ambition of their lives to promote and establish in the world. Third, That this

testimony could have gained the concurrence of the people to whom it was addressed, and that, with their eyes perfectly open to its falsehood, they should be ready to make the sacrifice of life and of fortune in supporting it. Fourth, That this testimony should never have been contradicted by the Jews, and that they should have neglected so effectual an opportunity of disgracing a religion, the progress of which they contemplated with so much jealousy and alarm. Add to this, that it is not the testimony of one writer which we are making to pass through the ordeal of so many difficulties. It is the testimony of many writers, who lived at different times and in different countries, and who add the very singular circumstance of their entire agreement with one another, to the other circumstances equally unaccountable, which we have just now enumerated. The falsehood of their united testimony is not to be conceived. It is a supposition which we are warranted to condemn, upon the strength of any one of the above improbabilities taken separately. But the fair way of estimating their effect upon the argument, is to take them jointly, and in the language of the doctrine of chances, to take the product of all the improbabilities into one another. The argument which this product furnishes for the truth of the Christian testimony, has, in strength and conclusiveness, no parallel in the whole compass of ancient literature.

The testimony of Celsus is looked upon as peculiarly valuable, because it is disinterested. But if this consideration gives so much weight to the testimony of Celsus, why should so much doubt and suspicion annex to the testimony of Christian writers, several of whom, before his time, have given a fuller and more express testimony to the authenticity of the Gospels? In the persecutions they sustained; in the obvious tone of sincerity and honesty which runs through their writings; in their general agreement upon this subject; in the multitude of their followers, who never could have confided in men that ventured to commit themselves, by the assertion of what was obviously and notoriously false; in the check which the vigilance, both of Jews and Heathens, exercised over evry Christian writer of that period, —in all these circumstances, they give every evidence of having delivered a fair and unpolluted testimony.

CHAP. III.

ON THE INTERNAL MARKS OF TRUTH AND HONESTY TO BE FOUND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

II. We shall now look into the New Testament itself, and endeavour to lay before the reader the internal marks of truth and honesty, which are to be found in it.

Under this head, it may be right to insist upon the minute accuracy, which runs through all its allusions to the existing manners and circumstances of the times. To appreciate the force of this argument, it would be right to attend to the peculiar situation of Judea, at the time of our Saviour. It was then under the dominion of the Roman emperors, and comes frequently under the notice of the profane historians of that period. From this source we derive a great variety of information, as to the manner in which the emperors conducted the government of their different provinces; what degree of indulgence was allowed to the religious opinions of the people whom they held in subjection; in how far they were suffered to live under the administration of their own laws; the power which was vested in the presidents of provinces; and a number of other circumstances relative to the criminal and civil jurisprudence of that period. In this way, there is a great number of different points in which the historians of the New Testament can be brought into comparison with the secular historians of the age. The history of Christ and his apostles contains innumerable references to the state of public affairs. It is not the history of obscure and unnoticed individuals. They had attracted much of the public attention. They had been before the governors of the country. They had passed through the established forms of justice; and some of them underwent the trial and punishment of the times. It is easy to perceive, then, that the

New Testament writers were led to allude to a number of these circumstances in the political history and constitution of the times, which came under the cognizance of ordinary historians. This was delicate ground for an inventor to tread upon; and particularly, if he lived at an age subsequent to the time of his history. He might in this case have fabricated a tale, by confining himself to the obscure and familiar incidents of private history; but it is only for a true and a contemporary historian, to sustain a continued accuracy, through his minute and numerous allusions to the public policy and government of the times.

Within the period of the Gospel history, Judea experienced a good many vicissitudes in the state of its government. At one time it formed part of a kingdom under Herod the Great. At another, it formed part of a smaller government under Archelaus. It after this came under the direct administration of a Roman governor; which form was again interrupted for several years, by the elevation of Herod Agrippa to the sovereign power, as exercised by his grandfather; and it is at last left in the form of a province at the conclusion of the evangelical history. There were also frequent changes in the political state of the countries adjacent to Judea; and which are often alluded to in the New Testament. A caprice of the reigning emperor often gave rise to a new form of government, and a new distribution of territory. It will be readily conceived, how much these perpetual fluctuations in the state of public affairs, both in Judea and its neighbourhood, must add to the power and difficulty of that ordeal to which the Gospel history has been subjected.

On this part of the subject, there is no want of witnesses with whom to confront the writers of the New Testament. In addition to the Roman writers who have touched upon the affairs of Judea, we have the benefit of a Jewish historian, who has given us a professed history of his own country. From him, as was to be expected, we have a far greater quantity of copious and detailed narrative, relative to the internal affairs of Judea, to the manners of the people, and those particulars which are connected with their religious belief, and ecclesiastical constitution. With many, it will be supposed to add to the value of his testimony, that he was not a Christian; but that, on the other

hand, we have every reason to believe him to have been a most zealous and determined enemy to the cause. It is really a most useful exercise, to pursue the harmony which subsists between the writers of the New Testament, and those Jewish and profane authors, with whom we bring them into comparison. Throughout the whole examination, our attention is confined to forms of justice; successions of governors in different provinces; manners, and political institutions. We are therefore apt to forget the sacredness of the subject; and we appeal to all, who have prosecuted this inquiry, if this circumstance is not favourable to their having a closer and more decided impression of the truth of the Gospel history. By instituting a comparison between the evangelists and contemporary authors, and restricting our attention to those points which come under the cognizance of ordinary history, we put the apostles and evangelists on the footing of ordinary historians; and it is for those, who have actually undergone the labour of this examination, to tell how much this circumstance adds to the impression of their authenticity. The mind gets emancipated from the peculiar delusion which attaches to the sacredness of the subject, and which has the undoubted effect of restraining the confidence of its inquiries. The argument assumes a secular complexion, and the writers of the New Testament are restored to that credit, with which the reader delivers himself up to any other historian, who has a much less weight and quantity of historical evidence in his favour.

We refer those readers who wish to prosecute this inquiry, to the first volume of Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospels*. We shall restrict ourselves to a few general observations on the nature and precise effect of the argument.

In the first place, the accuracy of the numerous allusions to the circumstances of that period, which the Gospel history embraces, forms a strong corroboration of that antiquity, which we have already assigned to its writers from external testimony. It amounts to a proof, that it is the production of authors wh[illegible]v-ed antecedent to the destruction of Jerusalem, and consequently about the time that is ascribed to them by all the external testimony which has already been insisted upon. It is that accu-

racy, which could only be maintained by a contemporary historian. It would be difficult, even for the author of some general speculation, not to betray his time by some occasional allusion to the ephemeral customs and institutions of the period in which he wrote. But the authors of the New Testament run a much greater risk. There are five different pieces of that collection which are purely historical, and where there is a continued reference to the characters, and politics, and passing events of the day. The destruction of Jerusalem swept away the whole fabric of Jewish polity; and it is not to be conceived, that the memory of a future generation could have retained that minute, that varied, that intimate acquaintance with the statistics of a nation no longer in existence, which is evinced in every page of the evangelical writers. We find, in point of fact, that both the Heathen and Christian writers of subsequent ages do often betray their ignorance of the particular customs which obtained in Judea during the time of our Saviour. And it must be esteemed a strong circumstance in favour of the antiquity of the New Testament, that on a subject, in which the chances of detection are so numerous, and where we can scarcely advance a single step in the narrative, without the possibility of betraying our time by some mistaken allusion, it stands distinguished from every later composition, in being able to bear the most minute and intimate comparison with the contemporary historians of that period.

The argument derives great additional strength, from viewing the New Testament, not as one single performance, but as a collection of several performances. It is the work of no less than eight different authors, who wrote without any appearance of concert, who published in different parts of the world, and whose writings possess every evidence, both internal and external, of being independent productions. Had only one author exhibited the same minute accuracy of allusion, it would have been esteemed a very strong evidence of his antiquity. But when we see so many authors exhibiting such a well sustained and almost unexpected accuracy through the whole of their varied and distinct narratives, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion, that they were either the eye-witnesses of their own history, or lived about the period of its accomplishment.

When different historians undertake the affairs of the same period, they either derive their information from one another, or proceed upon distinct and independent information of their own. Now, it is not difficult to distinguish the copyist from the original historian. There is something in the very style and manner of an original narrative, which announces its pretensions. It is not possible that any one event, or any series of events, should make such a similar impression upon two witnesses, as to dispose them to relate it in the same language, to describe it in the same order, to form the same estimate as to the circumstances which should be noticed as important, and those other circumstances which should be suppressed as immaterial. Each witness tells the thing in his own way, makes use of his own language, and brings forward circumstances which the other might omit altogether, as not essential to the purpose of his narrative. It is this agreement in the facts, with this variety in the manner of describing them, that never fails to impress upon the inquirer that additional conviction which arises from the concurrence of separate and independent testimonies. Now, this is precisely that kind of coincidence which subsists between the New Testament writers and Josephus, in their allusions to the peculiar customs and institutions of that age. Each party maintains the style of original and independent historians. The one often omits altogether, or makes only a slight and distant allusion to what occupies a prominent part in the composition of the other. There is not the slightest vestige of any thing like a studied coincidence between them. There is variety, but no opposition; and it says much for the authenticity of both histories, that the most scrupulous and attentive criticism can scarcely detect a single example of an apparent contradiction in the testimony of these different authors, which does not admit of a likely or at least a plausible reconciliation.

When the differenoe between two historians is carried to the length of a contradiction, it enfeebles the credit of both their testimonies. When the agreement is carried to the length of a close and scrupulous resemblance in every particular, it destroys the credit of one of the parties as an independent historian. In the case before us, we neither perceive this difference,

nor this agreement. Such are the variations, that, at first sight, the reader is alarmed with the appearance of very serious and embarrassing difficulties. And such is the actual coincidence, that the difficulties vanish when we apply to them the labours of a profound and intelligent criticism. Had it been the object of the Gospel writers to trick out a plausible imposition on the credulity of the world, they would have studied a closer resemblance to the existing authorities of that period; nor would they have laid themselves open to the superficial brilliancy of Voltaire, which dazzles every imagination, and reposed their vindication with the Lelands and Lardners of a distant posterity, whose sober erudition is so little attended to, and which so few know how to appreciate.

In the Gospels, we are told that Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee, married his brother Philip's wife. In Josephus we have the same story; only he gives a different name to Philip, and calls him Herod; and what adds to the difficulty, there was a Philip of that family, whom we know not to have been the first husband of Herodias. This is at first sight a little alarming. But, in the progress of our inquiries, we are given to understand from this same Josephus, that there were three Herods in the same family, and therefore no improbability in there being two Philips. We also know, from the histories of that period, that it was quite common for the same individual to have two names; and this is never more necessary, than when employed to distinguish brothers who have one name the same. The Herod who is called Philip, is just as likely a distinction, as the Simon who is called Peter, or the Saul who is called Paul. The name of the high priest, at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion, was Caiaphas, according to the evangelists. According to Josephus, the name of the high priest at that period was Joseph. This would have been precisely a difficulty of the same kind, had not Josephus happened to mention, that this Joseph was also called Caiaphas. Would it have been dealing fairly with the evangelists, we ask, to have made their credibility depend upon the accidental omission of another historian? Is it consistent with any acknowledged principle of sound criticism, to bring four writers so entirely under the tribunal of Josephus, each of

whom stands as firmly supported by all the evidences which can give authority to an historian; and who have greatly the advantage of him in this, that they can add the argument of their concurrence to the argument of each separate and independent testimony? It so happens, however, in the present instance, that even Jewish writers, in their narrative of the same circumstance, give the name of Philip to the first husband of Herodias. We by no means conceive, that any foreign testimony was necessary for the vindication of the evangelists. Still, however, it must go far to dissipate every suspicion of artifice in the construction of their histories. It proves, that in the confidence with which they delivered themselves up to their own information, they neglected appearance, and felt themselves independent of it. This apparent difficulty, like many others of the same kind, lands us in a stronger confirmation of the honesty of the evangelists; and it is delightful to perceive, how truth receives a fuller accession to its splendour, from the attempts which are made to disgrace and to darken it.

On this branch of the argument, the impartial inquirer must be struck with the little indulgence which infidels, and even Christians, have given to the evangelical writers. In other cases, when we compare the narratives of contemporary historians, it is not expected, that all the circumstances alluded to by one will be taken notice of by the rest; and it often happens, that an event or a custom is admitted upon the faith of a single historian; and the silence of all other writers is not suffered to attach suspicion or discredit to his testimony. It is an allowed principle, that a scrupulous resemblance between two histories is very far from necessary to their being held consistent with one another. And, what is more, it sometimes happens, that with contemporary historians there may be an apparent contradiction, and the credit of both parties remain as entire and unsuspicious as before. Posterity is in these cases disposed to make the most liberal allowances. Instead of calling it a contradiction, they often call it a difficulty. They are sensible, that in many instances, a seeming variety of statement has, upon a more extensive knowledge of ancient history, admitted of a perfect reconciliation. Instead, then, of referring the difficulty

in question to the inaccuracy or bad faith of any of the parties, they with more justness and more modesty, refer it to their own ignorance, and to that obscurity which necessarily hangs over the history of every remote age. These principles are suffered to have great influence in every secular investigation; but so soon as, instead of a secular, it becomes a sacred investigation, every ordinary principle is abandoned, and the suspicion annexed to the teachers of religion is carried to the dereliction of all that candour and liberality, with which every other document of antiquity is judged of and appreciated. How does it happen, that the authority of Josephus should be acquiesced in as a first principle, while every step, in the narrative of the evangelists, must have foreign testimony to confirm and support it? How comes it that the silence of Josephus should be construed into an impeachment of the testimony of the evangelists, while it is never admitted for a single moment, that the silence of the evangelists can impart the slightest blemish to the testimony of Josephus? How comes it that the supposition of two Philips in one family should throw a damp of scepticism over the Gospel narrative, while the only circumstance which renders that supposition necessary is the single testimony of Josephus; in which very testimony it is necessarily implied, that there are two Herods in that same family? How comes it, that the evangelists, with as much internal, and a vast deal more of external evidence in their favour, should be made to stand before Josephus, like so many prisoners at the bar of justice? In any other case, we are convinced that this would be looked upon as *rough handling*. But we are not sorry for it. It has given more triumph and confidence to the argument. And it is no small addition to our faith, that its first teachers have survived an examination, which, in point of rigour and severity, we believe to be quite unexampled in the annals of criticism.

It is always looked upon as a favourable presumption, when a story is told circumstantially. The art and the safety of an impostor, is to confine his narrative to generals, and not to commit himself by too minute a specification of time and place, and allusion to the manners or occurrences of the day. The more of circumstance that we introduce into a story, we multi-

ply the chances of detection, if false; and therefore, where a great deal of circumstance is introduced, it proves, that the narrator feels the confidence of truth, and labours under no apprehension for the fate of his narrative. Even though we have it not in our power to verify the truth of a single circumstance, yet the mere property of a story being circumstantial is always felt to carry an evidence in its favour. It imparts a more familiar air of life and reality to the narrative. It is easy to believe, that the groundwork of a story may be a fabrication; but it requries a more refined species of imposture than we can well conceive, to construct a harmonious and well sustained narrative, abounding in minute and circumstantial details which support one another, and where, with all our experience of real life, we can detect nothing misplaced, or inconsistent, or improbable.

To prosecute this argument in all its extent, it would be necessary to present the reader with a complete analysis or examination of the Gospel history. But the most superficial observer cannot fail to perceive, that it maintains, in a very high degree, the character of being a circumstantial narrative. When a miracle is recorded, we have generally the name of the town or neighbourhood where it happened; the names of the people concerned; the effect upon the hearts and convictions of the bye-standers; the arguments and examinations it gave birth to; and all that minuteness of reference and description which impresses a strong character of reality upon the whole history. If we take along with us the time at which this history made its appearance, the argument becomes much stronger. It does not merely carry a presumption in its favour, from being a circumstantial history: It carries a proof in its favour, because these circumstances were completely within the reach and examination of those to whom it was addressed. Had the evangelists been false historians, they would not have committed themselves upon so many particulars. They would not have furnished the vigilant inquiries of that period with such an effectual instrument for bringing them into discredit with the people; nor foolishly supplied, in every page of their narrative, so many materials for a cross-examination, which would infallibly have disgraced them.

Now, we of this age can institute the same cross-examination. We can compare the evangelical writers with contemporary authors, and verify a number of circumstances in the history, and government, and peculiar economy of the Jewish people. We therefore have it in our power to institute a cross-examination upon the writers of the New Testament; and the freedom and frequency of their allusions to these circumstances supply us with ample materials for it. The fact, that they are borne out in their minute and incidental allusions by the testimony of other historians, gives a strong weight of what has been called circumstantial evidence in their favour. As a specimen of the argument, let us confine our observations to the history of our Saviour's trial, and execution, and burial. They brought him to Pontius Pilate. We know both from Tacitus and Josephus, that he was at that time governor of Judea. A sentence from him was necessary before they could proceed to the execution of Jesus; and we know that the power of life and death was usually vested in the Roman governor. Our Saviour was treated with derision; and this we know to have been a customary practice at that time, previous to the execution of criminals, and during the time of it. Pilate scourged Jesus before he gave him up to be crucified. We know from ancient authors, that this was a very usual practice among the Romans. The account of an execution generally run in this form: He was stripped, whipped, and beheaded or executed. According to the evangelists, his accusation was written on the top of the cross; and we learn from Suetonius and others, that the crime of the person to be executed was affixed to the instrument of his punishment. According to the evangelist, this accusation was written in three different languages; and we know from Josephus, that it was quite common in Jerusalem to have all public advertisements written in this manner. According to the evangelists, Jesus had to bear his cross; and we know from other resources of information, that this was the constant practice of these times. According to the evangelists, the body of Jesus was given up to be buried at the request of friends. We know that, unless the criminal was infamous, this was the law, or the custom with all Roman governors.

These, and a few more particulars of the same kind, occur within the compass of a single page of the evangelical history. The circumstantial manner of the history affords a presumption in its favour, antecedent to all examination into the truth of the circumstances themselves. But it makes a strong addition to the evidence, when we find, that in all the subordinate parts of the main story, the evangelists maintain so great a consistency with the testimony of other authors, and with all we can collect from other sources of information, as to the manners and institutions of that period. It is difficult to conceive, in the first instance, how the inventor of a fabricated story would hazard such a number of circumstances, each of them supplying a point of comparison with other authors, and giving to the inquirer an additional chance of detecting the imposition. And it is still more difficult to believe, that truth should have been so artfully blended with falsehood in the composition of this narrative, particularly as we perceive nothing like a forced introduction of any one circumstance. There appears to be nothing out of place, nothing thrust in with the view of imparting an air of probability to the history. The circumstance upon which we bring the evangelists into comparison with profane authors, is often not intimated in a direct form, but in the form of a slight or distant allusion. There is not the most remote appearance of its being fetched or sought for. It is brought in accidentally, and flows in the most natural and undesigned manner out of the progress of the narrative.

The circumstance, that none of the Gospel writers are inconsistent with one another, falls better under a different branch of the argument. It is enough for our present purpose, that there is no single writer inconsistent with himself. It often happens, that falsehood carries its own refutation along with it; and that, through the artful disguises which are employed in the construction of a fabricated story, we can often detect a flaw or a contradiction, which condemns the authority of the whole narrative. Now, every single piece of the New Testament wants this mark or character of falsehood. The different parts are found to sustain, and harmonise, and flow out of each other. Each has at least the merit of being a consistent narrative. For

any thing we see upon the face of it, it may be true, and a further hearing must be given before we can be justified in rejecting it as the tale of an impostor.

There is another mark of falsehood which each of the Gospel narratives appears to be exempted from. There is little or no parading about their own integrity. We can collect their pretensions to credit from the history itself, but we see no anxious display of these pretensions. We cannot fail to perceive the force of that argument which is derived from the publicity of the Christian miracles, and the very minute and scrupulous examination which they had to sustain from the rulers and official men of Judea. But this publicity, and these examinations, are simply recorded by the evangelists. There is no boastful reference to these circumstances, and no ostentatious display of the advantage which they give to the Christian argument. They bring their story forward in the shape of a direct and unencumbered narrative, and deliver themselves with that simplicity and unembarrassed confidence, which nothing but their consciousness of truth, and the perfect feeling of their own strength and consistency, can account for. They do not write, as if their object was to carry a point that was at all doubtful or suspicious. It is simply to transmit to the men of other times, and of other countries, a memorial of the events which led to the establishment of the Christian religion in the world. In the prosecution of their narrative, we challenge the most refined judge of the human character, to point out a single symptom of diffidence in the truth of their own story, or of art to cloak this diffidence from the notice of the most severe and vigilant observers. The manner of the New Testament writers does not carry in it the slightest idea of its being an assumed manner. It is quite natural, quite unguarded, and free of all apprehension, that their story is to meet with any discredit or contradiction from any of those numerous readers, who had it fully in their power to verify or to expose it. We see no expedient made use of to obtain or to conciliate the acquiescence of their readers. They appear to feel as if they did not need it. They deliver what they have to say, in a round and unvarnished manner; nor is it in general accompanied with any of those strong

asseverations by which an impostor so often attempts to practice upon the credulity of his victims.

In the simple narrative of the evangelists, they betray no feeling of wonder at the extraordinary nature of the events which they record, and no consciousness that what they are announcing is to excite any wonder among their readers. This appears to us to be a very strong circumstance. Had it been the newly broached tale of an impostor, he would, in all likelihood, have feigned astonishment himself, or at least have laid his account with the doubt and astonishment of those to whom it was addressed. When a persen tells a wonderful story to a company who are totally unacquainted with it, he must be sensible, not merely of the surprise which is excited in the minds of the hearers, but of a corresponding sympathy in his own mind with the feelings of those who listen to him. He lays his account with the wonder, if not the incredulity, of his hearers; and this distinctly appears in the terms with which he delivers his story, and the manner in which he introduces it. It makes a wide difference, if, on the other hand, he tells the same story to a company, who have long been apprised of the chief circumstances, but who listen to him for the mere purpose of obtaining a more distinct and particular narrative. Now, in as far as we can collect from the manner of the evangelists, they stand in this last predicament. They do not write, as if they were imposing a novelty upon their readers. In the language of Luke, they write for the sake of giving more distinct information; and that the readers *might know the certainty of those things, wherein they had been instructed.* In the prosecution of this task, they deliver themselves with the most familiar and unembarrassed simplicity. They do not appear to anticipate the surprise of their readers, or to be at all aware, that the marvellous nature of their story is to be any obstacle to its credit or reception in the neighbourhood. At the first performance of our Saviour's miracles, there was a strong and a widely spread sensation over the whole country. *His fame went abroad,* and *all people were amazed.* This is quite natural; and the circumstance of no surprise being either felt or anticipated by the evangelists, in the writing of their history, can best be account-

ed for by the truth of the history itself, that the experience of years had blunted the edge of novelty, and rendered miracles familiar, not only to them, but to all the people to whom they addressed themselves.

What appears to us a most striking internal evidence for the truth of the Gospel, is that perfect unity of mind and of purpose which is ascribed to our Saviour. Had he been an impostor, he could not have foreseen all the fluctuations of his history, and yet no expression of surprise is recorded to have escaped from him. No event appears to have caught him unprepared. We see no shifting of doctrine or sentiment, with a view to accommodate to new or unexpected circumstances. His parables and warnings to his disciples give sufficient intimation, that he laid his account with all those events which appeared to his unenlightened friends to be so untoward and so unpromising. In every explanation of his objects, we see the perfect consistency of a mind, before whose prophetic eye all futurity lay open; and when the events of this futurity came round, he met them, not as chances that were unforeseen, but as certainties which he had provided for. This consistency of his views is supported through all the variations of his history, and it stands finally contrasted in the record of the evangelists, with the misconceptions, the surprises, the disappointments of his followers. The gradual progress of their minds from the splendid anticipations of earthly grandeur, to a full acquiescence in the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, throws a stronger light on the perfect unity of purpose and of conception which animated his, and which can only be accounted for by the inspiration that filled and enlightened it. It may have been possible enough to describe a well-sustained example of this contrast from an actual history before us. It is difficult, however, to conceive, how it could be sustained so well, and in a manner so apparently artless, by means of invention, and particularly when the inventors made their own errors and their own ignorance form part of the fabrication.

CHAP. IV.

ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE ORIGINAL WITNESSES TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL NARRATIVE.

III. THERE was nothing in the situation of the New Testament writers, which leads us to perceive that they had any possible inducement for publishing a falsehood.

We have not to allege the mere testimony of the Christian writers, for the danger to which the profession of Christianity exposed all its adherents at that period. We have the testimony of Tacitus to this effect. We have innumerable allusions, or express intimations, of the same circumstance in the Roman historians. The treatment and persecution of the Christians make a principle figure in the affairs of the empire; and there is no point better established in ancient history, than that the bare circumstance of being a Christian, brought many to the punishment of death, and exposed all to the danger of a suffering the most appalling and repulsive to the feelings of our nature.

It is not difficult to perceive, why the Roman government, in its treatment of Christians, departed from its usual principles of toleration. We know it to have been their uniform practice, to allow every indulgence to the religious belief of those different countries in which they established themselves. The truth is, that such an indulgence demanded of them no exertion of moderation or principle. It was quite consonant to the spirit of Paganism. A different country worshipped different gods, but it was a general principle of Paganism, that each country had its gods, to which the inhabitants of that country owed their peculiar homage and veneration. In this way there was no interference between the different religions which prevailed in the world. It fell in with the policy of the Roman government to allow the fullest toleration to other religions, and it demand-

ed no sacrific[e of] principle. It was even a dictate of principle with them to respect the gods of other countries; and the violation of a religion different from their own, seems to have been felt, not merely as a departure from policy or justice, but to be viewed with the same sentiment of horror which is annexed to blasphemy or sacrilege. So long as we were under Paganism, the truth of one religion did not involve in it the falsehood or rejection of another. In respecting the religion of another country, we did not abandon our own; nor did it follow, that the inhabitants of that other country annexed any contempt or discredit to the religion in which we had been educated. In this mutual reverence for the religion of each other, no principle was departed from, and no object of veneration abandoned. It did not involve in it the denial or relinquishment of our own gods, but only the addition of so many more gods to our catalogue.

In this respect, however, the Jews stood distinguished from every other people within the limits of the Roman empire. Their religious belief carried in it something more than attachment to their own system. It carried in it the contempt and detestation of every other. Yet, in spite of this circumstance their religion was protected by the mild and equitable toleration of the Roman government. The truth is, that there was nothing in the habits or character of the Jews, which was calculated to give much disturbance to the establishments of other countries. Though they admitted converts from other nations, yet their spirit of proselytism was far from being of that active or adventurous kind, which could alarm the Roman government for the safety of any existing institutions. Their high and exclusive veneration for their own system gave an unsocial disdain to the Jewish character, which was not at all inviting to foreigners; but still, as it led to nothing mischievous in point of effect, it seems to have been overlooked by the Roman government as a piece of impotent vanity.

But the case was widely different with the Christian system. It did not confine itself to the denial or rejection of every other system. It was for imposing its own exclusive authority over the consciences of all, and for detaching as many as it could

from their allegiance to the religion of their own country. It carried on its forehead all the offensive characters of a monopoly, and not merely excited resentment by the supposed arrogance of its pretensions, but from the rapidity and extent of its innovations, spread an alarm over the whole Roman empire for the security of all its establishments. Accordingly, at the commencement of its progsess, so long as it was confined to Judea and the immediate neighbourhood, it seems to have been in perfect safety from the persecutions of the Roman government. It was at first looked upon as a mere modification of Judaism, and that the first Christians differed from the rest of their countrymen only *in certain questions of their own superstition.* For a few years after the crucifixion of our Saviour, it seems to have excited no alarm on the part of the Roman emperors, who did not depart from their usual maxims of toleration, till they began to understand the magnitude of its pretensions, and the unlooked for success which attended them.

In the course of a very few years after its first promulgation, it drew down upon it the hostility of the Roman government; and the fact is undoubted, that some of its first teachers, who announced themselves to be the companions of our Saviour, and the eye-witnesses of all the remarkable events in his history, suffered martyrdom for their adherence to the religion which they taught.

The disposition of the Jews to the religion of Jesus was no less hostile; and it manifested itself at a still earlier stage of the business. The causes of this hostility are obvious to all who are in the slightest degree conversant with the history of those times. It is true, that the Jews did not at all times possess the power of life and death; nor was it competent for them to bring the Christians to execution by the exercise of legal authority. Still, however, their powers of mischief were considerable. Their wishes had always a certain controul over the measures of the Roman governor; and we know, that it was this controul which was the means of extorting from Pilate the unrighteous sentence by which the very first teacher of our religion was brought to a cruel and ignominious death. We also know, that under Herod Agrippa the power of life and death

was vested in a Jewish sovereign, and that this power was actually exerted against the most distinguished Christians of that time. Add to this, that the Jews had, at all times, the power of inflicting the lesser punishments. They could whip, they could imprison. Besides all this, the Christians had to brave the frenzy of an enraged multitude; and some of them actually suffered martyrdom in the violence of the popular commotions.

Nothing is more evident than the utter disgrace which was annexed by the world at large to the profession of Christianity at that period. Tacitus calls it "*superstitio exitiabilis*," and accuses the Christians of enmity to mankind. By Epictetus and others, their heroism is termed obstinacy, and it was generally treated by the Roman governors as the infatuation of a miserable and despised people. There was none of that glory annexed to it which blazes around the martyrdom of a patriot or a philosopher. That constancy, which, in another cause, would have made them illustrious, was held to be a contemptible folly, which only exposed them to the derision and insolence of the multitude. A name and a reputation in the world might sustain the dying moments of Socrates or Regulus; but what earthly principles can account for the intrepidity of those poor and miserable outcasts, who consigned themselves to a voluntary martyrdom in the cause of their religion?

Having premised these observations, we offer the following alternative to the mind of every candid inquirer. The first Christians either delivered a sincere testimony, or they imposed a story upon the world which they knew to be a fabrication.

The persecutions to which the first Christians voluntarily exposed themselves, compel us to adopt the first part of the alternative. It is not to be conceived, that a man would resign fortune, and character, and life, in the assertion of what he knew to be a falsehood. The first Christians must have believed their story to be true; and it only remains to prove, that if they believed it to be true, it must be true indeed.

A voluntary martyrdom must be looked upon as the highest possible evidence which it is in the power of man to give of his sincerity. The martyrdom of Socrates has never been ques-

tioned, as an undeniable proof of the sincere devotion of his mind to the principles of that philosophy for which he suffered. The death of Archbishop Cranmer will be allowed by all to be a decisive evidence of his sincere rejection of what he conceived to be the errors of Popery, and his thorough conviction in the truth of the opposite system. When the council of Geneva burnt Servetus, no one will question the sincerity of the latter's belief, however much he may question the truth of it. Now, in all these cases, the proof goes no farther than to establish the sincerity of the martyr's belief. It goes but a little way, indeed, in establishing the justness of it. This is a different question. A man may be mistaken, though he be sincere. His errors, if they are not seen to be such, will exercise all the influence and authority of truth over him. Martyrs have bled on the opposite sides of the question. It is impossible, then, to rest on this circumstance as an argument for the truth of either system; but the argument is always deemed incontrovertible, in as far as it goes to establish the sincerity of each of the parties, and that both died in the firm conviction of the doctrines which they professed.

Now, the martyrdom of the first Christians stands distinguished from all other examples by this circumstance, that it not merely proves the sincerity of the martyr's belief, but it also proves that what he believed was true. In other cases of martyrdom, the sufferer, when he lays down his life, gives his testimony to the truth of an opinion. In the case of the Christians, when they laid down their lives, they gave their testimony to the truth of a fact of which they affirmed themselves to be the eye and the ear witnesses. The sincerity of both testimonies is unquestionable; but it is only in the latter case that the truth of the testimony follows as a necessary consequence of its sincerity. An opinion comes under the cognizance of the understanding, ever liable, as we all know, to error and delusion. A fact comes under the cognizance of the senses, which have ever been esteemed as infallible, when they give their testimony to such plain, and obvious, and palpable appearances, as those which make up the evangelical story. We are still at liberty to question the philosophy of Socrates, or the orthodoxy of

Cranmer and Servetus; but if we were told by a Christian teacher, in the solemnity of his dying hour, and with the dreadful apparatus of martyrdom before him, that he saw Jesus after he had risen from the dead; that he conversed with him many days; that he put his hand into the print of his sides; and, in the ardour of his joyful conviction, exclaimed, "My Lord, and my God!" we should feel that there was no truth in the world, did this language and this testimony deceive us.

If Christianity be not true, then the first Christians must have been mistaken as to the subject of their testimony. This supposition is destroyed by the nature of the subject. It was not testimony to a doctrine which might deceive the understanding. It was something more than testimony to a dream, or a trance, or a midnight fancy, which might deceive the imagination. It was testimony to a multitude, and a succession of palpable facts, which could never have deceived the senses, and which preclude all possibility of mistake, even though it had been the testimony only of one individual. But when, in addition to this, we consider, that it is the testimony, not of one but of many individuals; that it is a story repeated in a variety of forms, but substantially the same; that it is the concurring testimony of different eye-witnesses, or the companions of eye-witnesses—we may, after this, take refuge in the idea of falsehood and collusion; but it is not to be admitted, that these eight different writers of the New Testament, could have all blundered the matter with such method, and such uniformity.

We know that, in spite of the magnitude of their sufferings, there are infidels, who, driven from the first part of the alternative, have recurred to the second, and have affirmed, that the glory of establishing a new religion, induced the first Christians to assert, and to persist in asserting, what they knew to be a falsehood. But (though we should be anticipating the last branch of the argument) they forget, that we have the concurrence of two parties to the truth of Chistianity, and that it is the conduct only of one of the parties, which can be accounted for by the supposition in question. The two parties are the teachers and the taught. The former may aspire to the glory of founding a new faith; but what glory did the latter propose to

themselves from being the dupes of an imposition so ruinous to every earthly interest, and held in such low and disgraceful estimation by the world at large? Abandon the teachers of Christianity to every imputation, which infidelity, on the rack for conjectures, to give plausibility to its system, can desire; how shall we explain the concurrence of its disciples? There may be a glory in leading, but we see no glory in being led. If Christianity were false, and Paul had the effrontery to appeal to his five hundred living witnesses whom he alleges to have seen Christ after his resurrection; the submissive acquiescence of his disciples remains a very inexplicable circumstance. The same Paul, in his epistles to the Corinthians, tells them that some of them had the gift of healing, and the power of working miracles; and that the signs of an apostle had been wrought among them in wonders and mighty deeds. A man aspiring to the glory of an accredited teacher, would never have committed himself on a subject, where his falsehood could have been so readily exposed. And in the veneration with which we know his epistles to have been preserved by the church of Corinth, we have not merely the testimony of their writer to the truth of the Christian miracles, but the testimony of a whole people, who had no interest in being deceived.

Had Christianity been false, the reputation of its first teachers lay at the mercy of every individual among the numerous proselytes which they had gained to their system. It may not be competent for an unlettered peasant to detect the absurdity of a doctrine; but he can at all times lift his testimony against a fact, said to have happened in his presence, and under the observation of his senses. Now it so happens, that in a number of the epistles, there are allusions to, or express intimations of, the miracles that had been wrought in the different churches to which these epistles are addressed. How comes it, if it be all a fabrication, that it was never exposed? We know, that some of the disciples were driven, by the terrors of persecuting violence, to resign their profession. How should it happen, that none of them ever attempted to vindicate their apostacy, by laying open the artifice and insincerity of their Christian teachers? We may be sure that such a testimony would have been highly

acceptable to the existing authorities of that period. The Jews would have made the most of it; and the vigilant and discerning officers of the Roman government would not have failed to turn it to account. The mystery would have been exposed and laid open, and the curiosity of latter ages would have been satisfied as to the wonderful and unaccountable steps, by which a religion could make such head in the world, though it rested its whole authority on facts; the falsehood of which was accessible to all who were at the trouble to inquire about them. But no! We hear of no such testimony from the apostates of that period. We read of some, who, agonized at the reflection of their treachery, returned to their first profession, and expiated, by martyrdom, the guilt which they felt they had incurred by their dereliction of the truth. This furnishes a strong example of the power of conviction, and when we join with it, that it is conviction in the integrity of those teachers who appealed to miracles which had been wrought among them, it appears to us a testimony in favour of our religion which is altogether irresistible.

CHAP. V.

ON THE TESTIMONY OF SUBSEQUENT WITNESSES.

IV. But this brings us to the last division of the argument, viz. that the leading facts in the history of the Gospel are corroborated by the testimony of others.

The evidence we have already brought forward for the antiquity of the New Testament, and the veneration in which it was held from the earliest ages of the church, is an implied testimony of all the Christians of that period to the truth of the Gospel history. By proving the authenticity of St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, we not merely establish his testimony to the truth of the Christian miracles,—we establish the additional testimony of the whole church of Corinth, who would never have respected these Epistles, if Paul had ventured upon a falsehood so open to detection, as the assertion, that miracles were wrought among them, which not a single individual ever witnessed. By proving the authenticity of the New Testament at large, we secure, not merely that argument, which is founded on the testimony and concurrence of its different writers, but also the testimony of those immense multitudes, who, in distant countries, submitted to the New Testament as the rule of their faith. The testimony of the teachers, whether we take into consideration the subject of that testimony, or the circumstances under which it was delivered, is of itself a stronger argument for the truth of the Gospel history, than can be alleged for the truth of any other history, which has been transmitted down to us from ancient times. The concurrence of the taught carries along with it a host of additional testimonies, which gives an evidence to the evangelical story, that is altogether unexampled. On a point of ordinary history, the testimony of Tacitus is held decisive, because it is not contradicted. The history of the New Testament is not only not contradicted, but confirmed by the

strongest possible expressions which men can give of their acquiescence in its truth; by thousands who were either agents or eye-witnesses of the transactions recorded, who could not be deceived, who had no interest, and no glory to gain by supporting a falsehood, and who, by their sufferings in the cause of what they professed to be their belief, gave the highest evidence that human nature can give of sincerity.

In this circumstance, it may be perceived, how much the evidence for Christianity goes beyond all ordinary historical evidence. A profane historian relates a series of events which happen in a particular age; and we count it well, if it be his own age, and if the history which he gives us be the testimony of a contemporary author. Another historian succeeds him at the distance of years, and, by repeating the same story, gives the additional evidence of his testimony to its truth. A third historian perhaps goes over the same ground, and lends another confirmation to the history. And it is thus, by collecting all the lights which are thinly scattered over the tract of ages and of centuries, that we obtain all the evidence which can be got, and all the evidence that is generally wished for.

Now, there is room for a thousand presumptions, which, if admitted, would overturn the whole of this evidence. For any thing we know, the first historians may have had some interest in disguising the truth, or substituting in its place a falsehood, and a fabrication. True, it has not been contradicted, but they form a very small number of men, who feel strongly or particularly interested in a question of history. The literary and speculative men of that age may have perhaps been engaged in other pursuits, or their testimonies may have perished in the wreck of centuries. The second historian may have been so far removed in point of time from the events of his narratives, that he can furnish us not with an independent, but with a derived testimony. He may have copied his account from the original historian, and the falsehood have come down to us in the shape of an authentic and well-attested history. Presumptions may be multiplied without end; yet in spite of them, there is a natural confidence in the veracity of man, which disposes us to as firm a belief in many of the facts of ancient history, as in the occurrences of the present day.

The history of the Gospel, however, stands distinguished from all other history by the uninterrupted nature of its testimony, which carries down its evidence, without a chasm, from its earliest promulgation to the present day. We do not speak of the superior weight and splendour of its evidences, at the first publication of that history, as being supported, not merely by the testimony of one, but by the concurrence of several independent witnesses. We do not speak of its subsequent writers, who follow one another in a far closer and more crowded train, than there is any other example of in the history or literature of the world. We speak of the strong though unwritten testimony of its numerous proselytes, who, in the very fact of their proselytism, give the strongest possible confirmation to the Gospel, and fill up every chasm in the recorded evidence of past times.

In the written testimonies for the truth of the Christian religion, Barnabas comes next in order to the first promulgators of the evangelical story. He was a contemporary of the apostles, and writes a very few years after the publication of the pieces which make up the New Testament. Clement follows, who was a fellow-labourer of Paul, and writes an epistle in the name of the church of Rome, to the church of Corinth. The written testimonies follow one another with a closeness and a rapidity of which there is no example; but what we insist on at present, is the unwritten and implied testimony of the people who composed these two churches. There can be no fact better established, than that these two churches were planted in the days of the apostles, and that the Epistles which were respectively addressed to them, were held in the utmost authority and veneration. There is no doubt, that the leading facts of the Gospel history were familiar to them; that it was in the power of many individuals amongst them to verify these facts, either by their own personal observation, or by an actual conversation with eye-witnesses; and that in particular, it was in the power of almost every individual in the church of Corinth, either to verify the miracles which St. Paul alludes to, in his epistle to that church, or to detect and expose the imposition, had there been no foundation for such an allusion. What do we see in

all this, but the strongest possible testimony of a whole people to the truth of the Christian miracles? There is nothing like this in common history,—the formation of a society, which can only be explained by the history of the Gospel, and where the conduct of every individual furnishes a distinct pledge and evidence of its truth. And to have a full view of the argument, we must reflect, that it is not one, but many societies, scattered over the different countries of the world; that the principle upon which each society was formed, was the divine authority of Christ and his apostles, resting upon the recorded miracles of the New Testament; that these miracles were wrought with a publicity, and at a nearness of time, which rendered them accessible to the inquiries of all, for upwards of half a century; that nothing but the power of conviction could have induced the people of that age to embrace a religion so disgraced and so persecuted; that every temptation was held out for its disciples to abandon it; and that though some of them, overpowered by the terrors of punishment, were driven to apostacy, yet not one of them has left us a testimony which can impeach the miracles of Christianity, or the integrity of its first teachers.

It may be observed, that in pursuing the line of continuity from the days of the apostles, the written testimonies for the truth of the Christian miracles follow one another in closer succession, than we have any other example of in ancient history. But what gives such peculiar and unprecedented evidence to the history of the Gospel is, that in the concurrence of the multitudes who embraced it, and in the existence of those numerous churches and societies of men who espoused the profession of the Christian faith, we cannot but perceive, that every small interval of time between the written testimonies of authors is filled up by materials so strong and so firmly cemented, as to present us with an unbroken chain of evidence, carrying as much authority along with it, as if it had been a diurnal record, commencing from the days of the apostles, and authenticated through its whole progress by the testimony of thousands.

Every convert to the Christian faith in those days, gives one additional testimony to the truth of the Gospel history. Is he a Gentile? The sincerity of his testimony is approved by the

persecutions, the sufferings, the danger, and often the certainty of martyrdom, which the profession of Christianity incurred. Is he a Jew ? The sincerity of his testimony is approved by all these evidences, and in addition to them by this well known fact, that the faith and doctrine of Christianity were in the highest degree repugnant to the wishes and prejudices of that people. It ought never to be forgotten, that in as far as Jews are concerned, Christianity does not owe a single proselyte to its doctrines, but to the power and credit of its evidences, and that Judea was the chief theatre on which these evidences were exhibited. It cannot be too often repeated, that these evidences rest not upon arguments, but upon facts ; and that the time, and the place, and the circumstance, rendered these facts accessible to the inquiries of all who chose to be at the trouble of this examination. And there can be no doubt that this trouble was taken, whether we reflect on the nature of the Christian faith, as being so offensive to the pride and bigotry of the Jewish people, or whether we reflect on the consequences of embracing it which were derision, and hatred, and banishment, and death. We may be sure, that a step which involved in it such painful sacrifices, would not be entered into upon light and insufficient grounds. In the sacrifices they made, the Jewish converts gave every evidence of having delivered an honest testimony in favour of the Christian miracles; and when we reflect, that many of them must have been eye-witnesses, and all of them had it in their power to verify these miracles, by conversation and correspondence with bye-standers, there can be no doubt, that it was not merely an honest, but a competent testimony. There is no fact better established, than that many thousands among the Jews believed in Jesus and his apostles; and we have therefore to allege their conversion, as a strong additional confirmation to the written testimony of the original historians.

One of the popular objections against the truth of the Christian miracles, is the general infidelity of the Jewish people. We are convinced, that at the moment of proposing this objection, an actual delusion exists in the mind of the infidel. In his conception, the Jews and the Christians stand opposed to each other. In the belief of the latter, he sees nothing but a party or

an interested testimony, and in the unbelief of the former, he sees a whole people persevering in their ancient faith, and resisting the new faith on the ground of its insufficient evidences. He forgets all the while, that the testimony of a great many of these Christians, is in fact the testimony of Jews. He only attends to them in their present capacity. He contemplates them in the light of Christians, and annexes to them all that suspicion and incredulity which are generally annexed to the testimony of an interested party. He is aware of what they are at present, Christians and defenders of Christianity; but he has lost sight of their original situation, and is totally unmindful of this circumstance, that in their transition from Judaism to Christianity, they have given him the very evidence he is in quest of. Had another thousand of these Jews renounced the faith of their ancestors, and embraced the religion of Jesus, they would have been equivalent to a thousand additional testimonies in favour of Christianity, and testimonies too of the strongest and most unsupicious kind, that can well be imagined. But this evidence would make no impression on the mind of an infidel, and the strength of it is disguised, even from the eyes of the Christian. These thousand, in the moment of their conversion, lose the appellation of Jews, and merge into the name and distinction of Christians. The Jews, though diminished in number, retain the national appellation; and the obstinacy with which they persevere in the belief of their ancestors, is still looked upon as the adverse testimony of an entire people. So long as one of that people continues a Jew, his testimony is looked upon as a serious impediment in the way of the Christian evidences. But the moment he becomes a Christian, his motives are contemplated with distrust. He is one of the obnoxious and suspected party. The mind carries a reference only to what he is, and not to what he has been. It overlooks the change of sentiment, and forgets, that, in the renunciation of old habits, and old prejudices, in defiance to sufferings and disgrace, in attachment to a religion so repugnant to the pride and bigotry of their nation, and above all, in submission to a system of doctrines which rested its authority on the miracles of their own time, and their own remembrance, every Jewish con-

vert gives the most decisive testimony which man can give for the truth and divinity of our religion.

But why, then, says the infidel, did they not all believe? Had the miracles of the Gospel been true, we do not see how human nature could have held out against an evidence so striking and so extraordinary; nor can we at all enter into the obstinacy of that belief which is ascribed to the majority of the Jewish people, and which led them to shut their eyes against a testimony, that no man of common sense, we think, could have resisted.

Many Christian writers have attempted to resolve this difficulty, and to prove that the infidelity of the Jews, in spite of the miracles which they saw, is perfectly consistent with the known principles of human nature. For this purpose, they have enlarged, with much force and plausibility, on the strength and inveteracy of the Jewish prejudices—on the bewildering influence of religious bigotry upon the understanding of men—on the woeful disappointment which Christianity offered to the pride and interest of the nation—on the selfishness of the priesthood—and on the facility with which they might turn a blind and fanatical multitude, who had been trained, by their earliest habits, to follow and to revere them.

In the Gospel history itself, we have a very consistent account at least of the Jewish opposition to the claims of our Saviour. We see the deeply wounded pride of a nation, that felt itself disgraced by the loss of its independence. We see the arrogance of its peculiar and exclusive claims to the favour of the Almighty. We see the anticipation of a great prince, who was to deliver them from the power and subjection of their enemies. We see their insolent contempt for the people of other countries, and the foulest scorn that they should be admitted to an equality with themselves in the honours and benefits of a revelation from heaven. We may easily conceive, how much the doctrine of Christ and his apostles was calculated to gall, and irritate, and disappoint them; how it must have mortified their national vanity; how it must have alarmed the jealousy of an artful and interested priesthood; and how it must have scandalized the great body of the people, by the liberality with which it addressed itself to all men, and to all nations, and raised to an elevation with

themselves, those whom the firmest habits and prejudices of their country had led them to contemplate under all the disgrace and ignominy of outcasts.

Accordingly, we know, in fact, that bitterness, and resentment, and wounded pride, lay at the bottom of a great deal of the opposition, which Christianity experienced from the Jewish people. In the New Testament history itself, we see repeated examples of their outrageous violence; and this is confirmed by the testimony of many other writers. In the history of the martyrdom of Polycrap, it is stated, that the Gentiles and Jews inhabiting Smyrna, in a furious rage, and with a loud voice, cried out, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods, who teacheth all men not to sacrifice, nor to worship them!" They collected wood, and the dried branches of trees, for his pile; and it is added, "the Jews also, according to custom, assisting with the greatest forwardness." It is needless to multiply testimonies to a point so generally understood; as, that it was not conviction alone, which lay at the bottom of their opposition to the Christians; that a great deal of passion entered into it; and that their numerous acts of hostility against the worshippers of Jesus, carry in them all the marks of fury and resentment.

Now we know that the power of passion will often carry it very far over the power of conviction. We know that the strength of conviction is not in proportion to the quantity of evidence *presented*, but to the quantity of evidence *attended* to, and perceived, in consequence of that attention. We also know, that attention is, in a great measure, a voluntary act, and that it is often in the power of the mind, both to turn away its attention from what would land it in any painful or humiliating conclusion, and to deliver itself up exclusively to those arguments, which flatter its taste and its prejudices. All this lies within the range of familiar and every-day experience. We all know how much it ensures the success of an argument, when it gets a *favourable* hearing. In by far the greater number of instances, the parties in a litigation are not merely each *attached* to their own side of the question; but each *confident and believing* that theirs is the side on which the justice lies. In those

contests of opinion, which take place every day between man and man, and particularly if passion and interest have any share in the controversy, it is evident to the slightest observation, that though it might have been selfishness, in the first instance, which gave a peculiar direction to the understanding, yet each of the parties often comes, at last, to entertain a sincere conviction in the truth of his own argument. It is not that truth is not one and immutable. The whole difference lies in the observers; each of them viewing the object through the medium of his own prejudices, or cherishing those peculiar habits of attention and understanding, to which taste or inclination had disposed him.

In addition to all this, we know, that though the evidence for a particular truth be so glaring, that it forces itself upon the understanding, and all the sophistry of passion and interest cannot withstand it; yet if this truth be of a very painful and humiliating kind, the obstinacy of man will often dispose him to resist its influence, and, in the bitterness of his malignant feelings, to carry a hostility against it, and that too in proportion to the weight of the argument which may be brought forward in its favour.

Now, if we take into account the inveteracy of the Jewish prejudices, and reflect how unpalatable and how mortifying to their pride must have been the doctrine of a crucified Saviour; we believe that their conduct, in reference to Christianity and its miraculous evidences, presents us with nothing anomalous or inexplicable, and that it will appear a possible and a likely thing to every understanding, that has been much cultivated in the experience of human affairs, in the nature of mind, and in the science of its character and phemonena.

There is a difficulty, however, in the way of this investigation. From the nature of the case, it bears no resemblance to any thing else, that has either been recorded in history, or has come within the range of our own personal observation. There is no other example of a people called upon to renounce the darling faith and principles of their country, and that upon the authority of miracles exhibited before them. All the experience we have about the operation of prejudice, and the perverseness

of the human temper and understanding, cannot afford a complete solution of the question. In many respects, it is a case *sui generis* and the only creditable information which we can obtain, to enlighten us in this inquiry, is through the medium of that very testimony upon which the difficulty in question has thrown the suspicion that we want to get rid of.

Let us give all the weight to this argument of which it is susceptible, and the following is the precise degree in which it effects the merits of the controversy. When the religion of Jesus was promulgated in Judea, its first teachers appealed to miracles wrought by themselves in the face of day, as the evidence of their being commissioned by God. Many adopted the new religion upon this appeal, and many rejected it. An argument in favour of Christianity is derived from the conduct of the first. An objection against Christianity is derived from the conduct of the second. Now, allowing that we are not in possession of experience enough for estimation, in *absolute terms* the strength of the objection, we propose the following as a solid and unexceptionable principle, upon which to estimate a comparison between the strength of the objection and the strength of the argument. We are sure that the first would not have embraced Christianity had its miracles been false; but we are not sure beforehand, whether the second would have rejected this religion on the supposition of the miracles being true. If experience does not enlighten us as to how far the exhibition of a real miracle would be effectual in inducing men to renounce their old and favourite opinions, we can infer nothing decisive from the conduct of those who still kept by the Jewish religion. This conduct was a matter of uncertainty, and any argument which may be extracted from it cannot be depended upon. But the case is widely different with that party of their nation who were converted from Judaism to Christianity. We know that the alleged miracles of Christianity were perfectly open to examination. We are sure, from our experience of human nature, that in a question so interesting, this examination would be given. We know, from the very nature of the miraculous facts, so remote from every thing like what would be attempted by jugglery, or pretended to by enthusiasm, that, if this examina-

tion were given, it would fix the truth or falsehood of the miracles. The truth of these miracles, then, for any thing we know, may be consistent with the conduct of the Jewish party; but the falsehood of these miracles, from all that we do know of human nature, is not consistent with the conduct of the Christian party. Granting that we are not sure whether a miracle would force the Jewish nation to renounce their opinions, all that we can say of the conduct of the Jewish party is that we are not able to explain it. But there is one thing that we are sure of. We are sure, that if the pretensions, of Christianity be false, it never could have forced any part of the Jewish nation to renounce their opinions, with its alleged miracles, so open to detection, and its doctrines so offensive to every individual. The conduct of the Christian party then is not only what we are able to explain, but we can say with certainty, that it admits of no other explanation that the truth of that hypothesis which we contend for. We may not know in how far an attachment to existing opinions will prevail over an argument which is felt to be true; but we are sure, that this attachment will never give way to an argument which is perceived to be false; and particularly when danger, and hatred, and persecution, are the consequences of embracing it. The argument for Christianity, from the conduct of the first proselytes, rests upon the firm ground of experience. The objection against it, from the conduct of the unbelieving Jews, has no experience whatever to rest upon.

The conduct of the Jews may be considered as a solitary fact in the history of the world, not from its being an exception to the general principles of human nature, but from its being an exhibition of human nature in singular circumstances. We have no experience to guide us in our opinion as to the probability of his conduct; and nothing, therefore, that can impeach a testimony which all experience in human affairs leads us to repose in as unquestionable. But after this testimony is admitted, we may submit to be enlightened by it; and in the history which it gives us of the unbelieving Jews, it furnishes a curious fact as to the power of prejudice upon the human mind, and a valuable accession to what we before knew of the principles of our nature. It lays before us an exhibition of the human mind in a sit-

uation altogether unexampled, and furnishes us with the result of a singular experiment, if we may so call it, in the history of the species. We offer it as an interesting fact to the moral and intellectual philosopher, that a previous attachment may sway the mind even against the impression of a miracle; and those who believe not in the historical evidence which established the authority of Christ and of the apostles, would not believe even though one rose from the dead.

We are inclined to think, that the argument has come down to us in the best possible form, and that it would have been enfeebled by that very circumstance, which the infidel demands as essential to its validity. Suppose for a moment that we could give him what he wants, that all the priests and people of Judea were so borne down by the resistless evidence of miracles, as by one universal consent to become the disciples of the new religion. What interpretation might have been given to this unanimous movement in favour of Christianity? A very unfavourable, one, we apprehend, to the authenticity of its evidences. Will the infidel say, that he has a higher respect for the credibility of those miracles which ushered in the dispensation of Moses, because they were exhibited in the face of a whole people, and gained their unexcepted submission to the laws and the ritual of Judaism? This new revolution would have received the same explanation. We would have heard of its being sanctioned by their prophecies, of its being agreeable to their prejudices, of its being supported by the countenance and encouragement of their priesthood, and that the jugglery of its miracles imposed upon all, because all were willing to be deceived by them. The actual form in which the history has come down, presents us with an argument free of all these exceptions. We, in the first instance, behold a number of proselytes, whose testimony to the facts of Christianity is approved of by what they lost and suffered in the maintenance of their faith; and we, in the second instance, behold a number of enemies, eager, vigilant, and exasperated, at the progress of the new religion, who have not questioned the authenticity of our histories, and whose silence, as to the public and widely talked of miracles of Christ and his apostles, we have a right to interpret into the most triumphant of all testimonies.

The same process of reasoning is applicable to the case of the Gentiles. Many adopted the new religion, and many rejected it. We may not be sure, if we can give an adequate explanation of the conduct of the latter, on the supposition that the evidences are true; but we are perfectly sure, that we can give no adequate explanation of the conduct of the former, on the supposition that the evidences are false. For any thing we know, it is possible that the one party may have adhered to their former prejudices, in opposition to all the force and urgency of argument, which even an authentic miracle carries along with it. But we know that it is not possible that the other party should renounce these prejudices, and that too in the face of danger and persecution, unless the miracles had been authentic. So great is the difference between the strength of the argument and the strength of the objection, that we count it fortunate for the merits of the cause, that the conversions to Christianity were partial. We, in this way, secure all the support which is derived from the inexplicable fact of the silence of its enemies, inexplicable on every supposition, but the undeniable evidence and certainty of the miracles. Had the Roman empire made a unanimous movement to the new religion, and all the authorities of the state lent their concurrence to it, there would have been a suspicion annexed to the whole history of the Gospel, which cannot at present apply to it; and from the collision of the opposite parties, the truth has come down to us in a far more unquestionable form than if no such collision had been excited.

The silence of Heathen and Jewish writers of that period, about the miracles of Christianity, has been much insisted upon by the enemies of our religion; and has even excited something like a painful suspicion in the breasts of those who are attached to its cause. Certain it is, that no ancient facts have come down to us, supported by a greater quantity of historical evidence, and better accompanied with all the circumstances which can confer credibility on that evidence. When we demand the testimony of Tacitus to the Christian miracles, we forget all the while that we can allege a multitude of much more decisive testimonies; no less than eight contemporary authors, and a train of succeeding writers, who follow one another with a

closeness and a rapidity, of which there is no example in any other department of ancient history. We forget that the authenticity of these different writers, and their pretensions to credit, are founded on considerations, perfectly the same in kind, though much stronger in degree, than what have been employed to establish the testimony of the most esteemed historians of former ages. For the history of the Gospel, we behold a series of testimonies, more continuous, and more firmly sustained, than there is any other example of in the whole compass of erudition. And to refuse this evidence, is a proof that in this investigation there is an aptitude in the human mind to abandon all ordinary principles, and to be carried away by the delusions which we have already insisted on.

But let us try the effect of that testimony which our antagonists demand. Tacitus has actually attested the existence of Jesus Christ; the reality of such a personage; his public execution under the administration of Pontius Pilate; the temporary check which this gave to the progress of his religion; its revival a short time after his death; its progress over the land of Judea, and to Rome itself, the metropolis of the empire;—all this we have in a Roman historian; and, in opposition to all established reasoning upon these subjects, it is by some more firmly confided in upon his testimony, than upon the numerous and concurring testimonies of nearer and contemporary writers. But be this as it may, let us suppose that Tacitus had thrown one particular more into his testimony, and that his sentence had run thus; "They had their denomination from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate, *and who rose from the dead on the third day after his execution, and ascended into heaven.*" Does it not strike every body, that however true the last piece of information may be, and however well established by its proper historians, this is not the place where we can expect to find it? If Tacitus did not believe the resurrection of our Saviour, (which is probably the case, as he never, in all likelihood, paid any attention to the evidence of a faith which he was led to regard, from the outset, as a pernicious superstition, and a mere modification of Judaism,) it is not to be supposed that such an assertion could

ever have been made by him. If Tacitus did believe the resurrection of our Saviour, he gives us an example of what appears not to have been uncommon in these ages—he gives us an example of a man adhering to that system which interest and education recommended, in opposition to the evidence of a miracle which he admitted to be true. Still, even on this supposition, it is the most unlikely thing in the world, that he would have admitted the fact of our Saviour's resurrection into his history. It is most improbable, that a testimony of this kind would have been given, even though the resurrection of Jesus Christ be admitted; and, therefore, the want of this testimony carries in it no argument that the resurrection is a falsehood. If, however, in opposition to all probability, this testimony had been given, it would have been appealed to as a most striking confirmation of the *main* fact of the evangelical history. It would have figured away in all our elementary treatises, and been referred to as a master argument in every exposition of the evidences of Christianity. Infidels would have been challenged to believe in it on the strength of their own favourite evidence, the evidence of a classical historian; and must have been at a loss how to dispose of this fact, when they saw an unbiassed heathen giving his round and unqualified testimony in its favour.

Let us now carry the supposition a step farther. Let us conceive that Tacitus not only believed the fact, and gave his testimony to it, but that he believed it so far as to become a Christian. Is his testimony to be refused, because he gives this evidence of its sincerity? Tacitus asserting the fact, and remaining a heathen, is not so strong an argument for the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, as Tacitus asserting the fact and becoming a Christian in consequence of it. Yet the moment that this transition is made—a transition by which, in point of fact, his testimony becomes stronger—in point of impression it becomes less; and, by a delusion, common to the infidel and the believer, the argument is held to be weakened by the very circumstance which imparts greater force to it. The elegant and accomplished scholar becomes a believer. The truth, the novelty, the importance of this new subject, withdraw him from every other pursuit. He shares in the common enthusiasm of the

cause, and gives all his talents and eloquence to the support of it. Instead of the Roman historian, Tacitus comes down to posterity in the shape of a Christian father, and the high authority of his name is lost in a crowd of similar testimonies.

A direct testimony to the miracles of the New Testament from the mouth of a heathen, is not to be expected. We cannot satisfy this demand of the infidel; but we can give him a host of much stronger testimonies than he is in quest of—the testimonies of those men who were heathens, and who embraced a hazardous and a disgraceful profession, under a deep conviction of those facts to which they gave their testimony. "O, but you now land us in the testimony of Christians!" This is very true; but it is the very fact of their being Christians in which the strength of the argument lies: and in each of the numerous fathers of the Christian church, we see a stronger testimony than the required testimony of the heathen Tacitus. We see men who, if they had not been Christians, would have risen to as high an eminence as Tacitus in the literature of the times; and whose direct testimonies to the gospel history would in that case, have been most impressive, even to the mind of an infidel. And are these testimonies to be less impressive, because they were preceeded by conviction, and sealed by martyrdom?

Yet though, from the nature of the case, no direct testimony to the Christian miracles from a heathen can be looked for, there are heathen testimonies which form an important accession to the Christian argument. Such are the testimonies to the state of Judea; the testimonies to those numerous particulars in government and customs, which are so often alluded to in the New Testament, and give it the air of an authentic history; and above all, the testimonies to the sufferings of the primitive Christians, from which we learn, through a channel clear of every suspicion, that Christianity, a religion of facts, was the object of persecution at a time, when eye-witnesses taught and eye-witnesses must have bled for it.

The silence af Jewish and heathen writers, when the true interpretation is given to it, is all on the side of the Christian argument. Even though the miracles of the Gospel had been

believed to be true, it is most unlikely that the enemies of the Christian religion would have given their testimony to them; and the absence of this testimony is no impeachment therefore upon the reality of these miracles. But if the miracles of the Gospel had been believed to be false, it is most likely that this falsehood would have been asserted by the Jews and heathens of that period; and the circumstance of no such assertion having been given, is a strong argument for the reality of these miracles. Their silence in not asserting the miracles, is perfectly consistent with their truth; but their silence in not denying them, is not at all consistent with their falsehood. The entire silence of Josephus upon the subject of Christianity, though he wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem, and gives us the history of that period in which Christ and his apostles lived is certainly a very striking circumstance. The sudden progress of Christianity at that time, and the fame of its miracles, (if not the miracles themselves,) form an important part of the Jewish history. How came Josephus to abstain from every particular respecting it? Will you reverse every principle of criticism, and make the silence of Josephus carry it over the positive testimony of the many historical documents which have come down to us? If you refuse every Christian testimony upon the subject, you will not refuse the testimony of Tacitus, who asserts, that this religion spread over Judea, and reached the city of Rome, and was looked upon as an evil of such importance, that it became the object of an authorised persecution by the Roman government; and all this several years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and before Josephus composed his history. Whatever opinion may be formed as to the *truth* of Christianity, certain it is, that its *progress* constituted an object of sufficient magnitude, to compel the attention of any historian who undertook the affairs of that period. How then shall we account for the scrupulous and determined exclusion of it from the history of Josephus? Had its miracles been false, this Jewish historian would gladly have exposed them. But its miracles were true, and silence was the only refuge of an antagonist, and his wisest policy.

But though we gather no direct testimony from Josephus, yet

his history furnishes us with many satisfying additions to the Christian argument. In the details of policy and manners, he coincides in the main with the writers of the New Testament; and these coincidences are so numerous, and have so undesigned an appearance, as to impress on every person, who is at the trouble of making the comparison, the truth of the evangelical story.

If we are to look for direct testimonies to the miracles of the New Testament, we must look to that quarter, where alone it would be reasonable to expect them,—to the writings of the Christian fathers, men who were not Jews or heathens at the moment of recording their testimony; but who had been Jews or heathens, and who, in their transition to the ultimate state of Christians, give a stronger evidence of integrity, than if they had believed these miracles, and persisted in a cowardly adherence to the safest profession.

We do not undertake to satisfy every demand of the infidel. We think we do enough, if we prove that the thing demanded is most unlikely, even though the miracles should be true; and therefore that the want of it carries no argument against the truth of the miracles. But we do still more than this, if we prove that the testimonies which we actually possess are much stronger than the testimonies he is in quest of. And who can doubt this, when he reflects, that the true way of putting the case between the testimony of the Christian father, which we do have, and the testimony of Tacitus, which we do not have, is that the latter would be an assertion not followed up by that conduct, which would have been the best evidence of its sincerity; whereas the former is an assertion substantiated by the whole life, and by the decisive fact of the old profession having been renounced, and the new profession entered into,—a change where disgrace, and danger, and martyrdom were the consequences?

Let us, therefore, enter into an examination of these testimonies.

This subject has been in part anticipated, when we treated of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament. We have quotations and references to these books from five apos-

tolic fathers, the companions of the original writers. We have their testimonies sustained and extended by their immediate successors; and as we pursued this crowded series of testimonies downwards, they become so numerous, and so explicit, as to leave no doubt on the mind of the inquirers, that the different books of the New Testament are the publications of the authors, whose names they bear; and were received by the Christian world, as books of authority, from the first period of their appearance.

Now, every sentence in a Christian father, expressive of respect for a book in the New Testament, is also expressive of his faith in its contents. It is equivalent to his testimony for the miracles recorded in it. In the language of the law, it is an act by which he homologates the record, and superinduces his own testimony to that of the original writers. It would be vain to attempt speaking of all these testimonies. It cost the assiduous Lardner many years to collect them. They are exhibited in his credibility of the New Testament; and in the multitude of them, we see a power and a variety of evidence for the Christian miracles, which is quite unequalled in the whole compass of ancient history.

But, in addition to these testimonies in the gross, for the truth of the evangelical history, have we no distinct testimonies to the individual facts which compose it? We have no doubt of the fact, that Barnabas was acquainted with the Gospel by Matthew, and that he subscribed to all the information contained in that history? This is a most valuable testimony from a contemporary writer; and a testimony which embraces all the miracles narrated by the evangelist. But, in addition to this, we should like if Barnabas, upon his own personal conviction, could assert the reality of any of these miracles. It would be multiplying the original testimonies; for he was a companion and a fellow-labourer of the apostles. We should have been delighted, if, in the course of our researches into the literature of past times, we had met with an authentic record, written by one of the five hundred, that are said to have seen our Saviour after his resurrection, and adding his own narrative of this event to the narratives that have already come down to us. Now, is any

thing of this kind to be met with in ecclesiastical antiquity; How much of this kind of evidence are we in actual possession of? and if we have not enough to satisfy our keen appetite for evidence on a question of such magnitude, how is the want of it to be accounted for?

Let it be observed, then, that of the twenty-seven books which make up the New Testament, five are narrative or historical, viz. the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, which relate to the life and miracles of our Saviour, and the progress of his religion through the world, for a good many years after his ascension into heaven. All the rest, with the exception of the Revelation of St. John, are doctrinal or admonitory; and their main object is to explain the principles of the new religion, or to impress its duties upon the numerous proselytes who had even at that early period been gained over to the profession of Christianity.

Besides what we have in the New Testament, no other professed narrative of the miracles of Christianity has come down to us, bearing the marks of an authentic composition by any apostle, or any contemporary of the apostles. Now, to those, who regret this circumstance, we beg leave to submit the following observations. Suppose that one other narrative of the life and miracles of our Saviour had been composed, and, to give all the value to this additional testimony of which it is susceptible, let us suppose it to be the work of an apostle. By this last circumstance, we secure to its uttermost extent the advantage of an original testimony, the testimony of another eye-witness, and constant companion of our Saviour. Now, we ask, what would have been the fate of this performance? It would have been incorporated into the New Testament along with the other gospels. It may have been the Gospel according to Philip. It may have been the Gospel according to Bartholomew. At all events, the whole amount of the advantage would have been the substitution of five Gospels instead of four, and this addition, the want of which is so much complained of, would scarcely have been felt by the Christian, or acknowledged by the infidel, to strengthen the evidence of which we are already in possession.

But to vary the supposition, let us suppose that the narrative wanted, instead of being the work of an apostle, had been the work of some other contemporary, who writes upon his own original knowledge of the subject, but was not so closely associated with Christ, or his immediate disciples, as to have his history admitted into the cononical scriptures. Had this history been preserved, it would have been transmitted to us in a separate state; it would have stood out from among that collection of writings, which passes under the general name of the New Testament, and the additional evidence thus afforded, would have come down in the form most satisfactory to those with whom we are maintaining our present argument. Yet though, in point of form, the testimony might be more satisfactory; in point of fact, it would be less so. It is the testimony of a less competent witness,—a witness who, in the judgment of his contemporaries, wanted those accomplishments which entitled him to a place in the New Testament. There must be some delusion operating upon the understanding, if we think that a circumstance, which renders an historian less accredited in the eyes of his own age, should render him more accredited in the eyes of posterity. Had Mark been kept out of the New Testament, he would have come down to us in that form, which would have made his testimony more impressive to a superficial inquirer; yet there would be no good reason for keeping him out, but precisely that reason which should render his testimony less impressive. We do not complain of this anxiety for more evidence, and as much of it as possible; but it is right to be told, that the evidence we have is of far more value than the evidence demanded, and that, in the concurrence of four canonical narratives, we see a far more effectual argument for the miracles of the New Testament, than in any number of those separate and extraneous narratives, the want of which is so much felt, and so much complained of.

That the New Testament is not one, but a collection of many testimonies, is what has been often said, and often acquiesced in. Yet even after the argument is formally acceded to, its impression is unfelt; and on this subject there is a great and an obstinate delusion, which not only confirms the infidel in his disre-

gard to Christianity, but even veils the strength of the evidence from its warmest admirers.

There is a difference between a mere narrative and a work of speculation or morality. The latter subjects embrace a wider range, admit a greater variety of illustration, and are quite endless in their application to the new cases that occur in the ever-changing history of human affairs. The subject of a narrative again admits of being exhausted. It is limited by the number of actual events. True, you may expatiate upon the character or importance of these events, but, in so doing, you drop the office of a pure historian, for that of the politician, or the moralist, or the divine. The evangelists give us a very chaste and perfect example of the pure narrative. They never appear in their own persons, or arrest the progress of the history for a single moment, by interposing their own wisdom, or their own piety. A gospel is a bare relation of what has been said or done; and it is evident that, after a few good compositions of this kind, any future attempts would be superfluous and uncalled for.

But, in point of fact, these attempts were made. It is to be supposed, that, after the singular events of our Saviour's history, the curiosity of the public would be awakened and there would be a demand for written accounts of such wonderful transactions. These written accounts were accordingly brought forward. Even in the interval of time between the ascension of our Saviour, and the publication of the earliest Gospel, such written histories seem to have been frequent. "Many," says St. Luke, (and in this he is supported by the testimony of subsequent writers,) "have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of these things." Now what has been the fate of all these performances? Such as might have been anticipated. They fell into disuse and oblivion. There is no evil design ascribed to the authors of them. They may have been written with perfect integrity, and been useful for a short time, and within a limited circle; but, as was natural, they all gave way to the superior authority, and more complete information, of our present narratives. The demand of the christian world was withdrawn from the less esteemed, to the more esteemed

histories of our Saviour. The former ceased to be read, and copies of them would be no longer transcribed or multiplied. We cannot find the testimony we are in quest of, not because it was never given, but because the early Christians, who were the most competent judges of that testimony, did not think it worthy of being transmitted to us.

But, though the number of narratives be necessarily limited by the nature of the subject, there is no such limitation upon works of a moral, didactic. or explanatory kind. Many such pieces have come down to us, both from the apostles themselves, and from the earlier fathers of the church. Now, though the object of these compositions is not to deliver any narrative of the Christian miracles, they may perhaps give us some occasional intimation of them. They may proceed upon their reality. We may gather either from incidental passages, or from the general scope of the performance, that the miracles of Christ and his apostles were recognised, and the divinity of our religion acknowledged, as founded upon these miracles.

The first piece of the kind with which we meet besides the writings of the New Testament, is an epistle ascribed to Barnabas, and, at all events, the production of a man, who lived in the days of the apostles. It consists of an exhortation to constancy in the Christian profession, a dissuasive from Judaism, and other moral instructions. We shall only give a quotation of a single clause from this work. "And he (i. e. our Saviour) making great signs and prodigies to the people of the Jews, they neither believed nor loved him."

The next piece in the succession of Christian writers, is the undoubted epistle of Clement, the bishop of Rome, to the church of Corinth, and who, by the concurrent voice of all antiquity, is the same Clement who is mentioned in the epistle to the Philippians, as the fellow-labourer of Paul. It is written in the name of the church of Rome, and the object of it is to compose certain dissentions which had arisen in the church of Corinth. It was out of his way to enter into any thing like a formal narrative of the miraculous facts which are to be found in the evangelical history. The subject of his epistle did not lead him to this; and besides the number and authority of the nar-

ratives already published, rendered an attempt of this kind altogether superfluous. Still, however, though a miracle may not be formally announced, it may be brought in incidentally, or it may be proceeded upon, or assumed as the basis of an argument. We give one or two examples of this. In one part of his epistle, he illustrates the doctrine of our resurrection from the dead, by the change and progression of natural appearances, and he ushers in this illustration with the following sentence: "Let us consider, my beloved, how the Lord shows us our future resurrection perpetually, of which he made the Lord Jesus Christ the first fruits, by raising him from the dead." This incidental way of bringing in the fact of our Lord's resurrection, appears to us the strongest possible form in which the testimony of Clement could have come down to us. It is brought forward in the most confident and unembarrassed manner. He does not stop to confirm this fact by any strong asseveration, nor does he carry, in his manner of announcing it, the most remote suspicion of its being resisted by the incredulity of those to whom he is addressing himself. It wears the air of an acknowledged truth, a thing understood and acquiesced in by all the parties in this correspondence. The direct narrative of the evangelists gives us their original testimony to the miracles of the Gospel. The artless and indirect allusions of the apostolic fathers, give us not merely their faith in this testimony, but the faith of the whole societies to which they write. They let us see, not merely that such a testimony was given, but that such a testimony was generally believed, and that too at a time when the facts in question lay within the memory of living witnesses.

In another part, speaking of the apostles, Clement says, that "receiving the commandments, and being filled with full certainty by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and confirmed by the word of God, with the assurance of the Holy Spirit, they went out announcing the advent of the kingdom of God.

It was no object in those days for a Christian writer to come over the miracles of the New Testament, with the view of lending his formal and explicit testimony to them. This testimony had already been completed to the satisfaction of the whole

Christian world. If much additional testimony has not been given, it is because it was not called for. But we ought to see, that every Christian writer, in the fact of his being a Christian, in his expressed reverence for the books of the New Testament, and in his numerous allusions to the leading points of the Gospel history, has given as satisfying evidence to the truth of the Christian miracles, as if he had left behind him a copious and distinct narrative.

Of all the miracles of the Gospel, it was to be supposed, that the resurrection of our Saviour would be oftenest appealed to; not as an evidence of his being a teacher,—for that was a point so settled in the mind of every Christian, that a written exposition of the argument was no longer necessary,—but as a motive to constancy in the Christian profession, and as the great pillar of hope in our own immortality. We accordingly meet with the most free and confident allusions to this fact in the early fathers. We meet with five intimations of this fact in the undoubted epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians: a father who had been educated by the apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ.

It is quite unnecessary to exhibit passages from the epistles of Ignatius to the same effect, or to pursue the examination downwards through the series of written testimonies. It is enough to announce it as a general fact, that, in the very first age of the Christian church, the teachers of this religion proceeded as confidently upon the reality of Christ's miracles and resurrection in their addresses to the people, as the teachers of the present day: Or, in other words, that they were as little afraid of being resisted by the incredulity of the people, at a time when the evidence of the facts was accessible to all, and habit and prejudice were against them, as we are of being resisted by the incredulity of an unlettered multitude, who listen to us with all the veneration of a hereditary faith.

There are five apostolic fathers, and a series of Christian writers who follow after them in rapid succession. To give an idea to those who are not conversant in the study of ecclesiastical antiquities, how well sustained the chain of testimony is from the first age of Christianity, we shall give a passage from

a letter of Irenæus, preserved by Eusebius. We have no less than nine compositions from different authors, which fill up the interval between him and Polycarp; and yet this is the way in which he speaks, in his old age, of the venerable Polycarp, in a letter to Florinus. "I saw you, when I was very young, in the Lower Asia with Polycarp. For I better remember the affairs of that time than those which have lately happened; the things which we learn in our childhood growing up in the soul, and uniting themselves to it. Insomuch, that I can tell the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and his going out, and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his person, and his discourses to the people; and how he related his conversation with John, and others who had seen the Lord; and how he related their sayings, and what he had heard from them concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrines, as he had received them from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life: all which Polycarp related agreeably to the Scriptures. These things I then, through the mercy of God towards me, diligently heard and attended to, recording them not on paper, but upon my heart."

Now is the time to exhibit to full advantage the argument which the different epistles of the New Testament afford. They are, in fact, so many distinct and additional testimonies. If the testimonies drawn from the writings of the Christian fathers are calculated to make any impression, then the testimonies of these epistles, where there is no delusion, and no prejudice in the mind of the inquirer, must make a greater impression. They are more ancient, and were held to be of greater authority by competent judges. They were held sufficient by the men of those days, who were nearer to the sources of evidence; and they ought, therefore, to be held sufficient by us. The early persecuted Christians had too great an interest in the grounds of their faith, to make a light and superficial examination. We may safely commit the decision to them; and the decision they have made, is, that the authors of the different epistles in the New Testament, were worthier of their confidence, as witnesses of the truth, than the authors of those compositions which were left out of the collection, and maintain, in our eye, the form of

a separate testimony. By what unaccountable tendency is it, that we feel disposed to reverse this decision, and to repose more faith in the testimony of subsequent and less esteemed writers? Is there any thing in the confidence given to Peter and Paul by their contemporaries, which renders them unworthy of ours? or, is the testimony of their writings less valuable and less impressive, because the Christians of old have received them as the best vouchers of their faith?

It gives us a far more satisfying impression than ever of the truth of our religion, when, in addition to several distinct and independent narratives of its history, we meet with a number of contemporaneous productions addressed to different societies, and all proceeding upon the truth of that history, as an agreed and unquestionable point among the different parties in the correspondence. Had that history been a fabrication, in what manner, we ask, would it have been followed up by the subsequent compositions of those numerous agents in the work of deception? How comes it, that they have betrayed no symptom of that insecurity which it would have been so natural to feel in their circumstances? Through the whole of these epistles, we see nothing like the awkward or embarrassed air of impostors. We see no anxiety, either to mend or to confirm the history that had already been given. We see no contest which they might have been called upon to maintain with the incredulity of their converts, as to the miracles of the Gospel. We see the most intrepid remonstrance against errors of conduct, or discipline, or doctrine. This savours strongly of upright and independent teachers; but is it not a most striking circumstance, that, among the severe reckonings which St. Paul had with some of his churches, he was never once called upon to school their doubts, or their suspicions, as to the reality of the Christian miracles? This is a point universally acquiesced in; and, from the general strain of these epistles, we collect, not merely the testimony of their authors, but the unsuspected testimony of all to whom they addressed themselves.

And let it never be forgotten, that the Christians, who compose these churches, were in every way well qualified to be arbiters in this question. They had the first authorities within

their reach. The five hundred who, Paul says to them, had seen our Saviour after his resurrection, could be sought after; and, if not to be found, Paul would have had his assertion to answer for. In some cases, they were the first authorities themselves, and had therefore no confirmation to go in search of. He appeals to the miracles which had been wrought among them, and in this way he commits the question to their own experience. He asserts this to the Galatians; and at the very time, too, that he is delivering against them a most severe and irritating invective. He intimates the same thing repeatedly to the Corinthians; and after he had put his honesty to so severe a trial, does he betray any insecurity as to his character and reputation among them? So far from this, that in arguing the general doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, as the most effectual method of securing assent to it, he rests the main part of the argument upon their confidence in his fidelity as a witness. "But if there be no resurrection from the dead, then is Christ not risen.—Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." Where, we ask, would have been the mighty charm of this argument, if Paul's fidelity had been questioned; and how shall we account for the free and intrepid manner in which he advances it, if the miracles which he refers to, as wrought among them, had been nullities of his own invention?

For the truth of the Gopel history, we can appeal to one strong and unbroken series of testimonies from the day of the apostles. But the great strength of the evidence lies in that effulgence of testimony, which enlightens this history at its commencement—in the number of its original witnesses—in the distinct and independent records which they left hehind them, and in the undoubted faith they bore among the numerous societies which they instituted. The concurrence of the apostolic fathers, and their immediate successors, forms a very strong and a very satisfying argument; but let it be further remembered, that out of the materials which compose, if we may be allowed the expression, the original charter of our faith, we can select a stronger body of evidence than it is possible to form out of the whole mass of subsequent testimonies.

CHAP. VI.

REMARKS ON THE ARGUMENT FROM PROPHECY.

VI. PROPHECY is another species of evidence to which Christianity professes an abundant claim, and which can be established on evidence altogether distinct from the testimony of its supporters. The prediction of what is future may not be delivered in terms so clear and intelligible as the history of what is past; and yet, in its actual fulfilment, it may leave no doubt on the mind of the inquirer that it was a prediction, and that the event in question was in the contemplation of him who uttered it. It may be easy to dispose of one isolated prophecy, by ascribing it to accident; but when we observe a number of these prophecies, delivered in different ages, and all bearing an application to the same events, or the same individual, it is difficult to resist the impression that they were actuated by a knowledge superior to human.

The obscurity of the prophetical language has been often complained of; but it is not so often attended to, that if the prophecy which foretels an event were as clear as the narrative which describes it, it would in many cases annihilate the argument. Were the history of any individual foretold in terms as explicit as it is in the power of narrative to make them, it might be competent for any usurper to set himself forward, and in as far as it depended upon his own agency, he might realize that history. He has no more to do than to take his lesson from the prophecy before him; but could it be said that fulfilment like this carried in it the evidence of any thing divine or miraculous? If the prophecy of a Prince and a Saviour, in the Old Testament, were different from what they are, and delivered in the precise and intelligible terms of an actual history; then every accomplishment which could be brought about by the agency of those who understood the prophecy, and were anxious for its

verification, is lost to the argument. It would be instantly said that the agents in the transaction took their clue from the prophecy before them. It is the way, in fact, in which infidels have attempted to evade the argument as it actually stands. In the New Testament, an event is sometimes said to happen, that *it might be fulfilled* what was spoken by some of the old prophets. If every event which enters into the Gospel had been under the controul of agents merely human, and friends to Christianity; then we might have had reason to pronounce the whole history to be one continued process of artful and designed accommodation to the Old Testament prophecies. But the truth is, that many of the events pointed at in the Old Testament, so far from being brought about by the agency of Christians, were brought about in opposition to their most anxious wishes. Some of them were brought about by the agency of their most decided enemies; and some of them, such as the dissolution of the Jewish state, and the dispersion of its people among all countries, were quite beyond the controul of the apostles and their followers, and were affected by the intervention of a neutral party, which at the time took no interest in the question, and which was a stranger to the prophecy, though the unconscious instrument of its fulfilment.

Lord Bolingbroke has carried the objection so far, that he asserts Jesus Christ to have brought on his own death, by a series of wilful and preconcerted measures, merely to give the disciples who came after him the triumph of an appeal to the old prophecies. This is ridiculous enough; but it serves to show with what facility an infidel might have evaded the whole argument, had these prophecies been free of all that obscurity which is now so loudly complained of.

The best form, for the purposes of argument, in which a prophecy can be delivered, is to be so obscure, as to leave the event, or rather its main circumstances, unintelligible before the fulfilment, and so clear as to be intelligible after it. It is easy to conceive that this may be an attainable object; and it is saying much for the argument as it stands, that the happiest illustrations of this clearness on the one hand, and this obscurity on the other, are to be gathered from the actual prophecies of the Old Testament.

It is not, however, by this part of the argument, that we expect to reclaim the enemy of our religion from his infidelity; not that the examination would not satisfy him, but that the examination will not be given. What a violence it would be offering to all his antipathies, were we to land him, at the outset of our discussions, among the chapters, of Daniel or Isaiah! He has too inveterate a contempt for the Bible. He nauseates the whole subject too strongly to be prevailed upon to accompany us to such an exercise. On such a subject as this, there is no contract, no approximation between us; and we therefore leave him with the assertion, (an assertion which he has no title to pronounce upon, till after he has finished the very examination in which we are most anxious to engage him,) that in the numerous prophecies of the Old Testament, there is such a multitude of allusions to the events of the New, as will give a strong impression to the mind of every inquirer, that the whole forms one magnificent series of communications between the visible and the invisible world; a great plan over which the unseen God presides in wisdom, and which, beginning with the first ages of the world, is still receiving new developements from every great step in the history of the species.

It is impossible to give a complete exposition of this argument without an actual reference to the prophecies themselves; and this we at present abstain from. But it can be conceived, that a prophecy, when first announced, may be so obscure, as to be unintelligible in many of its circumstances; and yet may so far explain itself by its accomplishment, as to carry along with it the most decisive evidence of its being a prophecy. And the argument may be so far strengthened by the number, and distance, and independence, of the different prophecies, all bearing an application to the same individual and the same history, as to leave no doubt on the mind of the observer, that the events in question were in the actual contemplation of those who uttered the prediction. If the terms of the prophecy were not comprehended, it at least takes off the suspicion of the event being brought about by the controul or agency of men who were interested in the accomplishment. If the prophecies of the Old Testament are just invested in such a degree of obscurity, as is

enough to disguise many of the leading circumstances from those who lived before the fulfilment,—while they derive from the event an explanation satisfying to all who live after it, then, we say, the argument for the divinity of the whole is stronger, than if no such obscurity had existed. In the history of the New Testament, we see a natural and consistent account of the delusion respecting the Messiah, in which this obscurity has left the Jewish people; of the strong prejudices, even of the first disciples; of the manner in which these prejudices were dissipated, only by the accomplishment; and of their final conviction in the import of these prophecies being at last so strong, that it often forms their main argument for the divinity of that new religion which they were commissioned to publish to the world. Now, assuming, what we still persist in asserting, and ask to be tried upon, that an actual comparison of the prophecies in the Old Testament, with their alleged fulfilment in the New, will leave a conviction behind it, that there is a real correspondence between them; we see, in the great events of the new dispensation brought about by the blind instrumentality of prejudice and opposition, far more unambiguous characters of the finger of God, than if every thing had happened with the full concurrence and anticipation of the different actors in this history.

There is another essential part of the argument, which is much strengthened by this obscurity. It is necessary to fix the date of the prophecies, or to establish, at least, that the time of their publication was antecedent to the events to which they refer. Now, had these prophecies been delivered in terms so explicit, as to force the concurrence of the whole Jewish nation, the argument for their antiquity, would not have come down in a form as satisfying, as that in which it is actually exhibited. The testimony of the Jews, to the date of their sacred writings, would have been refused as an interested testimony. Whereas, to evade the argument as it stands, we must admit a principle, which, in no question of ordinary criticism, would be suffered for a single moment to influence your understanding. We must conceive, that two parties, at the very time that they were influenced by the strongest mutual hostility, combined to sup-

port a fabrication; that they have not violated this combination; that the numerous writers on both sides of the question have not suffered the slightest hint of this mysterious compact to escape them; and that, though the Jews are galled incessantly by the triumphant tone of the Christian appeals to their own prophecies, they have never been tempted to let out a secret, which would have brought the argument of the Christians into disgrace, and shown the world, how falsehood and forgery mingled with their pretensions.

In the rivalry which, from the very commencement of our religion, has always obtained between Jews and Christians, in the mutual animosities of Christian sects, in the vast multiplication of copies of the Scriptures, in the distant and independent societies which were scattered over so many countries, we see the most satisfying pledge, both for the integrity of the sacred writings, and for the date which all parties agree in ascribing to them. We hear of the many securities which have been provided in the various forms of registrations, and duplicates, and depositories; but neither the wisdom, nor the interest of men ever provided more effectual checks against forgery and corruption, than we have in the instance before us. And the argument, in particular, for the antecedence of the prophecies to the events in the New Testament, is so well established by the concurrence of the two rival parties, that we do not see, how it is in the power of additional testimony to strengthen it.

But neither is it true, that the prophecies are delivered in terms so obscure, as to require a painful examination, before we can obtain a full perception of the argument. Those prophecies which relate to the fate of particular cities, such as Nineveh, and Tyre, and Babylon; those which relate to the issue of particular wars, in which the kings of Isreal and Judah were engaged; and some of those which relate to the future history of the adjoining countries, are not so much veiled by symbolical language, as to elude the understanding, even of the most negligent observers. It is true, that in these instances, both the prophecy and the fulfilment appear to us in the light of a distant antiquity. They have accomplished their end. They kept alive the faith and worship of successive generations. They

multiplied the evidences of the true religion, and account for a phenomenon in ancient history that is otherwise inexplicable, the existence and preservation of one solitary monument of pure theism in the midst of a corrupt and idolatrous world.

But to descend a little farther. We gather from the state of opinions at the time of our Saviour so many testimonies to the clearness of the old prophecies. The time and the place of our Saviour's appearance in the world, and the triumphant progress, if not the nature of his kingdom, were perfectly understood by the priests and chief men of Judea. We have it from the testimony of profane authors, that there was, at that time, a general expectation of a prince and a prophet all over the East. The destruction of Jerusalem was another example of the fulfilment of a clear prophecy; and this, added to other predictions uttered by our Saviour, and which received their accomplishment in the first generation of the Christian church, would have its use in sustaining the faith of the disciples amidst the perplexities of that anxious and distressing period.

We can even come down to the present day, and point to the accomplishment of clear prophecies in the actual history of the world. The present state of Egypt, and the present state of the Jews, are the examples which we fix upon. The one is an actual fulfilment of a clear prophecy; the other is also an actual fulfilment, and forms in itself the likeliest preparation for another accomplishment that is yet to come. Nor do we conceive, that these clear and literal fulfilments exhaust the whole of the argument from prophecy. They only form one part of the argument, but a part so obvious and irresistible, as should invite every lover of truth to the examination of the remainder. They should secure such a degree of respect for the subject, as to engage the attention, and awaken even in the mind of the most rapid and superficial observer; a suspicion that there may be something in it. They should soften that contempt which repels so many from investigating the argument at all, or at all events, they render that contempt inexcusable.

The whole history of the Jews is calculated to allure the curiosity, and had it not been leagued with the defence and illustration of our faith, would have drawn the attention of many a

philosopher, as the most singular exhibition of human nature that ever was recorded in the annals of the world. The most satisfying cause of this phenomenon is to be looked for in the history, which describes its origin and progress; and by denying the truth of that history, you abandon the only explanation which can be given of this wonderful people. It is quite in vain to talk of the immutability of Eastern habits, as exemplified in the nations of Asia. What other people ever survived the same annihilating processes? We do not talk of conquest, where the whole amount of the effect is in general a change of dynasty or of government; but where the language, the habits, the denomination, and above all, the geographical position, still remain to keep up the identity of the people. But in the history of the Jews, we see a strong indestructible principle, which maintained them in a separate form of existence amid changes that no other nation ever survived. We confine ourselves to the overthrow of their nation in the first century of our epoch, and appeal to the disinterested testimonies of Tacitus and Josephus, if ever the cruelty of war devised a process of more terrible energy for the utter extirpation of a name, and a remembrance from the world. They have been dispersed among all countries. They have no common tie of locality or government to keep them together. All the ordinary principles of assimilation, which make law, and religion, and manners, so much a matter of geography, are in their instance suspended. Even the smallest particles of this broken mass have resisted an affinity of almost universal operation, and remain undiluted by the strong and overwhelming admixture of foreign ingredients. And in exception to every thing which history has recorded of the revolutions of the species, we see in this wonderful race a vigorous principle of identity, which has remained in undiminished force for nearly two thousand years, and still pervades every shred and fragment of their widely scattered population. Now if the infidel insists upon it, we shall not rest on this as an argument. We can afford to give it up: for in the abundance of our resources, we feel independent of it. We shall say that it is enough, if it can reclaim him from his levity, and compel his attention to the other evidences which we have to offer him.

All we ask of him is to allow, that the undeniable singularity which is before his eyes, gives him a sanction at least, to examine the other singularities to which we make pretensions. If he goes back to the past history of the Jews, he will see in their wars the same unexampled preservation of their name and their nation. He will see them surviving the process of an actual transportation into another country. In short, he will see them to be unlike all other people in what observation offers, and authentic history records of them; and the only concession that we demand of him from all this, is, that their pretension to be unlike other people in their extraordinary revelations from heaven is at least possible, and deserves to be inquired into.

It may not be out of place to expose a species of injustice, which has often been done to the Christian argument. The defence of Christianity consists of several distinct arguments, which have sometimes been multiplied beyond what is necessary, and even sometimes beyond what is tenable. In addition to the main evidence which lies in the testimony given to the miracles of the Gospel, there is the evidence of prophecy; there is the evidence of collateral testimony; there is the internal evidence. The argument under each of these heads, is often made to undergo a father subdivision; and it is not to be wondered at, that in the multitude of observations, the defence of Christianity may often be made to rest upon ground, which, to say the least of it, is precarious or vulnerable. Now the injustice which we complain of is, that when the friends of our religion are dislodged from some feeble outwork, raised by an unskilful officer in the cause, its enemies raise the cry of a decisive victory. But, for our own part we could see her driven from all her defences, and surrender them without a sigh, so long as the phalanx of her historical evidence remains impenetrable. Behind this unscaled barrier, we could entrench ourselves, and eye the light skirmishing before us with no other sentiment than of regret, that our friends should, by the eagerness of their misplaced zeal, have given our enemy the appearance of a triumph. We offer no opinion as to the two-fold interpretation of prophecy; but though it were refuted by argument, and disgraced by ridicule, all that portion of evidence which lies in the nu-

merous examples of literal and unambiguous fulfilment remains unaffected by it. Many there are, who deny the inspiration of the Song of Solomon. But in what possible way does this affect the records of the evangelical history? Just as much as it affects the lives of Plutarch, or the Annals of Tacitus. There are a thousand subjects on which infidels may idly push the triumph, and Christians be as idly galled by the severity, or even the truth of their observations. We point to the historical evidence of the new Testament, and ask them to dispose of it. It is there, that we call them to the onset; for there lies the main strength of the Christian argument. It is true, that in the evidence of prophecy, we see a rising barrier, which, in the progress of centuries, may receive from time to time a new accumulation to the materials which form it. In this way, the evidence of prophecy may come in time to surpass the evidence of miracles. The restoration of the Jews will be the fulfilment of a clear prophecy, and form a proud and animating period in the history of our religion. "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness."

CHAP. VII.

REMARKS ON THE SCEPTICISM OF GEOLOGISTS.

VII. The late speculations in geology form another example of a distant and unconnected circumstance, being suffered to cast an unmerited disgrace over the whole of the argument. They give a higher antiquity to the world, than most of those who read the Bible had any conception of. Admit this antiquity, and in what possible way does it touch upon the historical evidence for the New Testament? The credibility of the Gospel miracles stands upon its own appropriate foundation, the recorded testimony of numerous and unexceptionable witnesses. The only way in which we can overthrow that credibility is by attacking the testimony, or disproving the authenticity of the record. Every other science is tried upon its own peculiar evidence; and all we contend for is, that the same justice be done to theology. When a mathematician offers to apply his reasoning to the phenomena of mind, the votaries of moral science resent it as an invasion, and make their appeal to the evidence of consciousness. When an amateur of botany, upon some vague analogies, offers his confident affirmations as to the structure and parts of the human body, there would be an instantaneous appeal to the knife and demonstrations of the anatomist. Should a mineralogist, upon the exhibition of an ingenious or well-supported theory, pronounce upon the history of our Saviour and his miracles; we would call it another example of an arbitrary and unphilosophical extension of principles beyond the field of their legitimate application. We would appeal to the kind and the quantity of testimony upon which that history is supported. We would suffer ourselves to be delighted by the brilliancy, or even convinced by the evidence of his speculations; but we would feel that the history of those facts, which form the ground-work of our faith, is as little affected by them,

as the history of any storm, or battle, or warrior, which has come down to us in the most genuine and approved records of past ages.

But whatever be the external evidence of testimony, or however strong may be its visible characters of truth and honesty, is not the falsehood or the contradiction which we may detect in the subject of that testimony sufficient to discredit it? Had we been original spectators of our Saviour's miracles, we must have had as strong a conviction of their reality, as it is in the power of testimony to give us. Had we been the eye-witnesses of his character and history, and caught from actual observation the impression of his worth, the internal proofs that no jugglery or falsehood could have been intended, would have been certainly as strong as the internal proofs which are now exhibited to us, and which consist in the simplicity of the narrative, and that tone of perfect honesty which pervades in a manner so distinct and intelligible, every composition of the apostles. Yet, with all these advantages, if Jesus Christ had asserted as a truth, what we confidently knew to be a falsehood; had he for example, upon the strength of his prophetical endowments, pronounced upon the secret of a person's age, and told us that he was thirty, when we knew him to be forty, would not this have made us stumble at all his pretensions, and, in spite of every other argument and appearance, would we not have withdrawn our confidence from him as a teacher from God? This we allow would have been a most serious dilemma. It would have been that state of neutrality which admits of nothing positive or satisfying on either side of the question; or rather, what is still more distressing, which gives me the most positive and satisfactory appearances on both sides. We could not abandon the truth of the miracles, because we saw them. Could we give them up, we should determine on a positive rejection, and our minds would find repose in absolute infidelity. But as the case stands, it is scepticism. There is nothing like it in any other department of inquiry. We can appeal to no actual example; but a student of natural science may be made to understand the puzzle, when we ask him, how he would act, if the experiment, which he conducts under the most perfect

sameness of circumstances, were to land him in opposite results? He would vary and repeat his experiments. He would try to detect the inconsistency, and would rejoice, if he at last found that the difficulty lay in the errors of his own observation, and not in the inexplicable nature of the subject. All this he would do in anxious and repeated endeavours, before he inferred that nature persevered in no law, and that that constancy, which is the foundation of all science, was perpetually broke in upon by the most capricious and unlooked for appearances; before he would abandon himself to scepticism, and pronounce philosophy to be an impossible attainment.

It is our part to imitate this example. If Jesus Christ has, on the one hand, performed miracles, and sustained in the whole tenor of his history the character of a prophet, and, on the other hand, asserted to be true, what we undeniably know to be a falsehood, this is a dilemma which we are called upon to resolve by every principle, that can urge the human mind in the pursuit of liberal inquiry. It is not enough to say, that the phenomena in question do not fall within the dominion of philosophy; and we therefore leave them as a fair exercise and amusement to commentators. The mathematician may say, and has said the same thing of the moralist yet there are moralists in the world, who will prosecute their speculations in spite of him; and what is more, there are men who take a wider survey than either, who rise above these professional prejudices, and will allow that, in each department of inquiry, the subjects which offer are entitled to a candid and respectful consideration. The naturalist may pronounce the same rapid judgment upon the difficulties of the theologian; yet there ever will be theologians who feel a peculiar interest in their subject; and we trust that there ever will be men, with a higher grasp of mind than either the mere theologian, or the mere naturalist, who are ready to acknowledge the claims of truth in every quarter,—who are superior to that narrow contempt, which has made such an unhappy and malignant separation among the different orders of scientific men,—who will examine the evidences of the Gospel history, and, if they are found to be sufficient, will view the miracles of our Saviour with the same liberal and philosophic curiosity with which they

would contemplate any grand phenomenon in the moral history of the species. If there really appears, on the face of this investigation, to be such a difficulty as the one in question, a philosopher of the order we are now describing will make many an anxious effort to extricate himself; he will not soon acquiesce in a scepticism, of which there is no other example in the wide field of human speculation; he will either make out the insufficiency of the historical evidence, or prove that the falsehood ascribed to Jesus Christ has no existence. He will try to dispose of one of the terms of the alleged contradiction, before he can prevail upon himself to admit both, and deliver his mind to a state of uncertainty most painful to those who respect truth in all her departments.

We offer the above observations, not so much for the purpose of doing away a difficulty which we conscientiously believe to have no existence, as for the purpose of exposing the rapid, careless, and unphilosophical procedure of some enemies to the Christian argument. They, in the first instance, take up the rapid assumption, that Jesus Christ has, either through himself, or his immediate disciples, made an assertion as to the antiquity of the globe, which, upon the faith of their geological speculations, they know to be a falsehood. After having fastened this strain upon the subject of the testimony, they by one summary act of the understanding, lay aside all the external evidence for the miracles and general character of our Saviour. They will not wait to be told, that this evidence is a distinct subject of examination; and that, if actually attended to, it will be found much stronger than the evidence of any other fact or history which has come down to us in the written memorials of past ages. If this evidence is to be rejected it must be rejected on its own proper grounds; but if all positive testimony, and all sound reasoning upon human affairs, go to establish it, then the existence of such proof is a phenomenon which remains to be accounted for, and must ever stand in the way of positive infidelity. Until we dispose of it, we can carry our opposition to the claims of our religion no farther than to the length of an ambiguous and midway scepticism. By adopting a decisive infidelity, we reject a testimony, which, of all others, has come down to

us in the most perfect and unsuspicious form. We lock up a source of evidence, which is often repaired to in other questions of science and history. We cut off the authority of principles, which, if once exploded, will not terminate in the solitary mischief of darkening and destroying our theology, but will shed a baleful uncertainty over many of the most interesting speculations on which the human mind can expatiate.

Even admitting, then, this single objection in the subject of our Saviour's testimony, the whole length to which we can legitimately carry the objection is scepticism, or that dilemma of the mind into which it is thrown by two contradictory appearances. This is the unavoidable result of admitting both terms in the alleged contradiction. Upon the strength of all the reasoning which has hitherto occupied us, we challenge the infidel to dispose of the one term, which lies in the strength of the historical evidence. But in different ways, we may dispose of the other which lies in the alleged falsehood of our Saviour's testimony. We may deny the truth of the geological speculation; nor is it necessary to be an accomplished geologist, that we may be warranted to deny it. We appeal to the speculations of the geologists themselves. They neutralize one another, and leave us in possession of free ground for the informations of the Old Testament. Our imaginations have been much regaled by the brilliancy of their speculations, but they are so opposite to each other, that we now cease to be impressed by their evidence. But there are other ways of disposing of the supposed falsehood of our Saviour's testimony. Does he really assert what hast been called the Mosaical antiquity of the world? It is true that he gives his distinct testimony to the divine legation of Moses; but does Moses ever say, that when God created the heavens and the earth, he did more at the time alluded to than transform them out of previously existing materials? Or does he ever say, that there was not an interval of many ages between the first act of creation, described in the first verse of the book of Genesis, and said to have been performed at the *beginning*; and those more detailed operations, the account of which commences at the second verse, and which are described to us as having been performed in so many days? Or, finally, does he

ever make us to understand, that the genealogies of man went any farther than to fix the antiquity of the species, and, of consequence, that they left the antiquity of the globe a free subject for the speculations of philosophers?—We do not pledge ourselves for the truth of one or all of these suppositions. Nor is it necessary that we should. It is enough that any of them is infinitely more rational than the rejection of Christianity in the face of its historical evidence. This historical evidence remains in all the obstinacy of experimental and well-attested facts; and as there are so many ways of expunging the other term in the alleged contradiction, we appeal to every enlightened reader, if it is at all candid or philosophical to suffer it to stand.

CHAP. VIII.

ON THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE, AND THE OBJECTIONS OF DEISTICAL INFIDELS.

THERE is another species of evidence for Christianity, which we have not yet noticed,—what is commonly called the *internal evidence*, consisting of those proofs that Christianity is a dispensation from heaven, which are founded upon the nature of its doctrines, and the character of the dispensation itself. The term "internal evidence" may be made, indeed, to take up more than this. We may take up the New Testament as a human composition, and without any reference to its subsequent history, or to the direct and external testimonies by which it is supported. We may collect from the performance itself such marks of truth and honesty, as entitle us to conclude, that the human agents employed in the construction of this book were men of veracity and principle. This argument has already been resorted to, and a very substantial argument it is. It is of frequent application in questions of general criticism; and upon its authority alone many of the writers of past times have been admitted into credit, and many have been condemned as unworthy of it. The numerous and correct allusions to the customs and institutions, and other statistics of the age in which the pieces of the New Testament profess to have been written, give evidence of their antiquity. The artless and undesigned way in which these allusions are interwoven with the whole history, impresses upon us the perfect simplicity of the authors, and the total absence of every wish or intention to palm an imposture upon the world. And there is such a thing too as a general air of authenticity, which however difficult to resolve into particulars, gives a very close and powerful impression of truth to the narrative. There is nothing fanciful in this species of internal evidence. It carries in it all the certainty of experience, and ex-

perience too upon a familiar and well known subject,—the characters of honesty in the written testimony of our fellow men. We are often called upon in private and every-day life to exercise our judgment upon the spoken testimony of others, and we both feel and undertsand the powerful evidence which lies in the tone, the manner, the circumstantiality, the number, the agreement of the witnesses, and the consistency of all the particulars with what we already know from other sources of information. Now it is undeniable, that all those marks which give evidence and credibility to spoken testimony, may also exist to a very impressive degree in written testimony; and the argument founded upon them, so far from being fanciful or illegitimate, has the sanction of a principle which no philosopher will refuse; the experience of the human mind on a subject on which it is much exercised, and which lies completely within the range of its observation.

We cannot say so much, however, for the other species of internal evidence, that which is founded upon the reasonableness of the doctrines, or the agreement which is conceived to subsist between the nature of the Christian religion and the character of the Supreme Being. We have experience of man, but we have no experience of God. We can reason upon the procedure of man in given circumstances, because this is an accessible subject, and comes under the cognizance of observation; but we cannot reason on the procedure of the Almighty in given circumstances. This is an inaccessible subject and comes not within the limits of direct and personal observation. The one, like the scale, and compass, and measurements of Sir Isaac Newton, will lead you on safe and firm footing to the true economy of the heavens; the other, like the ether and whirlpools, and unfounded imaginations of Des Cartes, will not only lead you to misconceive that economy, but to maintain a stubborn opposition to the only competent evidence that can be offered upon the subject.

We feel that in thus disclaiming all support from what is commonly understood by the internal evidence, we do not follow the general example of those who have writen on the Deistical controversy. Take up Leland's performance, and it will be found

that one half of his discussion is expended upon the reasonableness of the doctrines, and in asserting the validity of the argument which is founded upon that reasonableness. It would save a vast deal of controversy, if it should be proved that all this is superfluous and uncalled for; that upon the authority of the proofs already insisted on, the New Testament must be received as a revelation from heaven; and that, instead of sitting in judgement over it, nothing remains on our part but an act of unreserved submission to all the doctrine and information which it offers to us. It is conceived, that in this way the general argument might be made to assume a more powerful and impressive aspect; and the defence of Christianity be more accommodated to the spirit and philosophy of the times.

Since the spirit of Lord Bacon's philosophy began to be rightly understood, the science of external nature has advanced with a rapidity unexampled in the history of all former ages. The great axiom of his philosophy is so simple in its nature, and so undeniable in its evidence, that it is astonishing how philosophers were so late in acknowledging it, or in being directed by its authority. It is more than two thousand years since the phenomena of external nature were objects of liberal curiosity to speculative and intelligent men. Yet two centuries have scarcely elapsed since the true path of investigation has been rightly pursued, and steadily persevered in; since the evidence of experience has been received as paramount to every other evidence, or, in other words, since philosophers have agreed, that the only way to learn the magnitude of an object is to measure it, the only way to learn its tangible properties is to touch it, and the only way to learn its visible properties is to look at it.

Nothing can be more safe or more infallible than the procedure of the inductive philosophy as applied to the phenomena of external nature. It is the eye, or the ear-witness of every thing which it records. It is at liberty to classify appearances, but then in the work of classifying, it must be directed only by observation. It may group phenomena according to their resemblances. It may express these rosemblances in words, and announce them to the world in the form of general laws. Yet

such is the hardihood of the inductive philosophy, that though a single well attested fact should overturn a whole system, that fact must be admitted. A single experiment is often made to cut short the finest process of generalization, however painful and humiliating the sacrifice, and though a theory, the most simple and magnificent that ever charmed the eye of an enthusiast, was on the eve of emerging from it.

In submitting, then, to the rules of the inductive philosophy, we do not deny that certain sacrifices must be made, and some of the most urgent propensities of the mind, put under severe restraint and regulation. The human mind feels restless and dissatisfied under the anxieties of ignorance. It longs for the repose of conviction; and to gain this repose, it will often rather precipitate its conclusions, than wait for the tardy lights of observation and experiment. There is such a thing, too, as the love of simplicity and system—a prejudice of the understanding, which disposes it to include all the phenomena of nature under a few sweeping generalities—an indolence, which loves to repose on the beauties of a theory, rather than encounter the fatiguing detail of its evidences—a painful reluctance to the admission of facts, which, however true, break in upon the majestic simplicity that we would fain ascribe to the laws and operations of the universe.

Now, it is the glory of Lord Bacon's philosophy, to have achieved a victory over all these delusions; to have disciplined the minds of its votaries into an entire submission to evidence; to have trained them up in a kind of steady coldness to all the splendour and magnificence of theory, and taught them to follow, with unfaultering step, wherever the sure though humble path of experiment may lead them.

To justify the cautious procedure of the inductive philosophy, nothing more is necessary than to take a view of the actual powers and circumstances of humanity; of the entire ignorance of man when he comes into the world, and of the steps by which that ignorance is enlightened; of the numerous errors into which he is misled, the moment he ceases to observe, and begins to presume or to excogitate; of the actual history of science; its miserable progress, so long as categories and princi-

ples retained their ascendency in the schools; and the splendour and rapidity of its triumphs, so soon as man understood that he was nothing more than the disciple of Nature, and must take his lesson as Nature offers it to him.

What is true of the science of external nature, holds equally true of the science and phenomena of mind. On this subject, too, the presumptuous ambition of man carried him far from the sober path of experimental inquiry. He conceived that his business was not to observe, but to speculate; to construct systems rather than consult his own experience and the experience of others; to collect the materials of his theory, not from the history of observed facts, but from a set of assumed and excogitated principles. Now the same observations apply to this department of inquiry. We must admit to be true, not what we presume, but what we find to be so. We must restrain the enterprises of fancy. A law of the human mind must be only a series of well-authenticated facts, reduced to one general description, or grouped together under some general points of resemblance. The business of the moral as well as of the natural philosopher is not to assert what he excogitates, but to record what he observes; not to amuse himself with the speculations of fancy, but to describe phenomena as he sees or as he feels them. This is the business of the moral as well as of the natural inquirer. We must extend the application of Lord Bacon's principles to moral and metaphysical subjects. It was long before this application was recognized, or acted upon by philosophers. Many of the continental speculations are still infected with the presumptuous *a priori* spirit of the old schools; though the writings of Reid and Stewart have contributed much to chase away this spirit from the metaphysics of our own country, and to bring the science of mind, as well as matter, under the entire dominion of the inductive philosophy.

These general observations we conceive to be a most direct and applicable introduction to that part of the subject which is before us. In discussing the evidence of Christianity, all that we ask of our reader is to bring along with him the same sober and inductive spirit, that is now deemed so necessary in the prosecution of the other sciences; to abandon every system of the-

ology, that is not supported by evidence, however much it may gratify his taste, or regale his imagination, and to admit any system of theology, that is supported by evidence, however repugnant to his feelings or his prejudices; to make conviction, in fact paramount to inclination, or to fancy; and to maintain, through the whole process of the investigation, that strength and intrepidity of character, which will follow wherever the light of argument may conduct him, though it should land him in conclusions the most nauseous and unpalatable.

We have no time to enter into causes; but the fact is undeniable. Many philosophers of the present day are disposed to nauseate every thing connected with thology. They associate something low and ignoble with the prosecution of it. They regard it, as not a fit subject for liberal inquiry. They turn away from it with disgust, as one of the humblest departments of literary exertion. We do not say that they reject its evidences, but they evade the investigation of them. They feel no conviction; not because they have established the fallacy of a single argument, but because they entertain a general dislike at the subject, aad will not attend to it They love to expatiate in the more kindred fields of science or elegant literature; and while the most respectful caution, and humility, and steadiness, are seen to preside over every department of moral and physical investigation, theology is the only subject that is suffered to remain the victim of prejudice, and of a contempt the most unjust, and the most unphilosophical.

We do not speak of this feeling as an impiety; we speak of it as an offence against the principles of just speculation. We do not speak of it as it allures the heart from the influence of religion; we speak of it as it allures the understanding from the influence of evidence and truth. In a word, we are not preaching against it; we reason against it. We contend that it is a transgression against the rules of the inductive philosophy. All that we want is, the application of Lord Bacon's principles to the investigation before us; and as the influence of prejudice and disgust is banished from every other department of inquiry, we conceive it fair that it should be banished from theology also, and that our subject should have the common advantage of a

hearing,—where no partiality of the heart or fancy is admitted, and no other influence acknowledged than the influence of evidence over the convictions of the understanding.

Let us therefore endeavour to evince the success and felicity with which Lord Bacon's principles may be applied to the investigation before us.

According to Bacon, man is ignorant of every thing antecedent to observation ; and there is not a single department of inquiry, in which he does not err the moment that he abandons it. It is true, that the greater part of every individual's knowledge is derived immediately from testimony ; but it is only from testimony that brings home to his conviction the observation of others. Still it is observation which lies at the bottom of his knowledge. Still it is man taking his lesson from the actual condition of the the thing which he contemplates ; a condition that is altogether independent of his will, and which no speculation of his can modify or destroy. There is an obstinacy in the processes of nature, which he cannot controul. He must follow it. The construction of a system should not be a creative, but an imitative process, which admits nothing but what evidence assures us to be true, and is founded only on the lessons of experience. It is not by the exercise of a sublime and speculative ingenuity that man arrives at truth. It is by letting himself down to the drudgery of observation. It is by descending to the sober work of seeing, and feeling, and experimenting. Wherever, in short, he has not had the benefit of his own observation, or the observation of others brought home to his conviction by credible testimony, there he is ignorant.

This is found to hold true, even in those sciences where the objects of inquiry are the most familiar and the most accessible. Before the right method of philosophising was acted upon, how grossly did philosophers misinterpret the phenomena of external nature, when a steady perseverance in the path of observation could have led them to infallible certainty! How misled in their conception of every thing around them, when, instead of making use of their senses, they delivered themselves up to the exercises of a solitary abstraction, and thought to explain every thing by the fantastic play of unmeaning terms, and imaginary

principles! And, when at last set on the right path of discovery how totally different were the results of actual observation, from those systems which antiquity had rendered venerable, and the authority of great names had recommended to the acquiescence of many centuries! This proves that even in the most familiar subjects, man knows every thing by observation, and is ignorant of every thing without it; and that he cannot advance a single footstep in the acquirement of truth, till he bid adieu to the delusions of theory, and sternly refuse indulgence to its fondest anticipations.

Thus, there is both a humility and a hardihood in the philosophical temper. They are the same in principle, though different in display. The first is founded on a sense of ignorance, and disposes the mind of the philosopher to pay the most respectful attention to every thing that is offered in the shape of evidence. The second consists in a determined purpose to reject and to sacrifice every thing that offers to oppose the influence of evidence, or to set itself up against its legitimate and well-established conclusions. In the ethereal whirlpools of Des Cartes, we see a transgression against the humility of the philosophical character. It is the presumption of knowledge on a subject, where the total want of observation should have confined him to the modesty of ignorance. In the Newtonian system of the world, we see both humility and hardihood. Sir Isaac commences his investigation with all the modesty of a respectful inquirer. His is the docility of a scholar, who is sensible that he has all to learn. He takes his lesson as experience offers it to him, and yields a passive obedience to the authority of this great schoolmaster. It is in his obstinate adherence to the truth which his master has given him, that the hardihood of the philosophical character begins to appear. We see him announce, with entire confidence, both the fact and its legitimate consequences. We see him not deterred by the singularity of his conclusions, and quite unmindful of that host of antipathies which the reigning taste and philosophy of the times mustered up to oppose him. We see him resisting the influence of every authority, but the authority of experience. We see that the beauty of the old system had no power to charm him from that

process of investigation by which he destroyed it. We see him sitting upon its merits with the severity of a judge, unmoved by all those graces of simplicity and magnificence which the sublime genius of its inventor had thrown around it.

We look upon these two constituents of the philosophical temper, as forming the best preparation for finally terminating in the decided Christian. In appreciating the pretensions of Christianity, there is a call both upon the humility and the hardihood of every inquirer; the humility which feels its own ignorance, and submits without reserve to whatever comes before it in the shape of authentic and well-established evidence; and the hardihood, which sacrifices every taste and every prejudice at the shrine of conviction, which defies the scorn of a pretended philosophy, which is not ashamed of a profession that some conceive to be degraded by the homage of the superstitious vulgar, which can bring down its mind to the homeliness of the Gospel, and renounce, without a sigh, all that is elegant, and splendid, and fascinating, in the speculations of moralists. In attending to the complexion of the Christian argument, we are widely mistaken, if it is not precisely that kind of argument which will be most readily admitted by those whose minds have been trained to the soundest habits of philosophical investigation; and if that spirit of cautious and sober-minded inquiry to which modern science stands indebted for all her triumphs, is not the very identical spirit which leads us to "cast dowu all our lofty imaginations, and to bring every thought into the captivity of the obedience of Christ."

On entering into any department of inquiry, the best preparation is that docility of mind which is founded on a sense of our total ignorance of the subject; and nothing is looked upon as more unphilosophical than the temerity of that *a priori* spirit, which disposes many to presume before they investigate. But if we admit the total ignorance of man antecedent to observation, even in those siences where the objects of inquiry are the nearest and the most familiar, we will be more ready to admit his total ignorance of those subjects which are more remote and more inaccessible. If caution and modesty be esteemed so philosophical, even when employed in that little field of investiga-

tion which comes within the range of our senses; why should they not be esteemed philosophical when employed on a subject so vast, so awful, so remote from direct and personal observation, as the government of God? There can be nothing so completely above us, and beyond us, as the plans of the Infinite Mind, which extend to all time, and embrace all worlds. There is no subject to which the cautious and humble spirit of Lord Bacon's philosophy is more applicable; nor can we conceive a more glaring rebellion against the authority of his maxims, than for the beings of a day to sit in judgment upon the Eternal, and apply their paltry experience to the counsels of his high and unfathomable wisdom. We do not speak of it as impious; we speak of it as unphilosophical. We are not bringing the decrees of the orthodox to bear against it; we are bringing the principles of our modern and enlightened schools. We are applying the very same principles to a system of theism, that we would do to a system of geology. Both may regale the fancy with the grandeur of their contemplations; both may receive embellishment from the genius and imagination of their inventors; both may carry us along with the powers of a captivating eloquence. But all this is not enough to satisfy the severe and scrupulous spirit of the modern philosophy. Give us facts. Give us appearances. Show us how, from the experience of a life or a century, you can draw a legitimate conclusion so boundless in its extent, and by which you propose to fix down both the processes of a remote antiquity, and the endless progressions either of nature or of providence in future ages. Are there any historical documents? Any memorials of the experience of past times? On a question of such magnitude, we would esteem the recorded observations of some remote age to be peculiarly valuable, and worth all the ingenuity and eloquence which a philosopher could bestow on the limited experience of one or two generations. A process of geology may take millions of years before it reaches its accomplishment. It is impossible that we can collect the law or the character of this process from the experience of a single century, which does not furnish us one single step in this vast and immeasurable progression. We look as far as we can into a distant antiquity, and

take hold with avidity of any authentic document, by which we can ascertain a single fact to guide and to enlighten us in this interesting speculation. The same caution is necessary in the subject before us. The administration of the Supreme Being is coeval with the first purposes of his uncreated mind, and it points to eternity. The life of man is but a point in that progress, to which we see no end, and can assign no beginning. We are not able to collect the law or the character of this administration from an experience so momentary. We therefore cast an eye on the history of past times. We examine every document which comes before us. We compare all the moral phenomena which can be collected from the narratives of antiquity. We seize with avidity every record of the manifestations of Providence, every fact which can enlighten the ways of God to man; and we would esteem it a deviation from the right spirit and temper of philosophical investigation, were we to suffer the crude or fanciful speculations of our own limited experience to take a precedency over the authentic informations of history.

But this is not all. Our experience is not only limited in point of time; it is also limited in point of extent. To assign the character of the divine administration from the little that offers itself to the notice of our own personal experience, would be far more absurd than to infer the history and character of the kingdom from the history and character of our own family. Vain is the attempt to convey in language what the most powerful imagination sinks under; how small the globe, and "all which it inherits," is in the immensity of creation! How humble a corner in the immeasurable fields of nature and of providence! If the whole visible creation were to be swept away, we think of the dark and awful solitude which it would leave behind it in the unpeopled regions of space. But to a mind that could take in the whole, and throw a wide survey over the innumerable worlds which roll beyond the ken of the human eye, there would be no blank, and the universe of God would appear a scene as goodly and majestic as ever. Now it is the administration of this God that we sit in judgment upon; the counsels of Him, whose wisdom and energy are of a kind so inexplicable; whom no magnitude can overpower,

whom no littleness can escape, whom no variety can bewilder; who gives vegetation to every blade of grass, and moves every particle of blood which circulates through the veins of the minutest animal; and all this by the same omnipotent arm that is abroad upon the universe, and presides in high authority over the destiny of all worlds.

It is impossible not to mingle the moral impressions of piety with such a contemplation. But suppose these impressions to be excluded, that the whole may be reduced to a matter of abstract and unfeeling intelligence. The question under consideration is, How far the experience of man can lead him to any certain conclusions, as to the character of the divine administration; if it does lead him to some certain conclusions, then in the spirit of the Baconian philosophy, he will apply these conclusions to the information derived from other sources; and they will of course affect, or destroy, or confirm the credibility of that information. If, on the other hand, it appears that experience gives no light, no direction on the subject, then, in the very same spirit, he will submit his mind as a blank surface to all the positive information which comes to it from any other quarter. We take our lesson as it comes to us, provided we are satisfied beforehand, that it comes from a source which is authentic. We set up no presumptions of our own against the authority of the unquestionable evidence that we have met with, and reject all the suggestions which our defective experience can furnish, as the follies of a rash and fanciful speculation.

Now, let it be observed, that the great strength of the Christian argument lies in the historical evidence for the truth of the Gospel narrative. In discussing the light of this evidence, we walk by the light of experience. We assign the degree of weight that is due to the testimony of the first Christians upon the observed principles of human nature. We do not step beyond the cautious procedure of Lord Bacon's philosophy. We keep within the safe and certain limits of experimental truth. We believe the testimony of the apostles, because, from what we know of the human character, it is impossible that men in their circumstances could have persevered as they did in the assertion of a falsehood; it is impossible that they could have

imposed this falsehood upon such a multitude of followers; it is impossible that they could have escaped detection, surrounded as they were by a host of enemies, so eager and so determined in their resentments. On this kind of argument we are quite at home. There is no theory, no assumption. We feel every inch of the ground we are treading upon. The degree of credit that should be annexed to the testimony of the apostles, is altogether a question of experience. Every principle which we apply towards the decision of this question is founded upon materials which lie before us, and are every day within the reach of observation. Our belief in the testimony of the apostles, is founded upon our experience of human nature and human affairs. In the whole process of the inquiry, we never wander from that sure, though humble path, which has been pointed out to us by the great master of philosophising. We never cast off the authority of those maxims which have been found in every other department of knowledge to be sound and infallible. We never suffer assumption to take the precedency of observation, or abandon that safe and certain mode of investigation, which is the only one suited to the real mediocrity of our powers.

It appears to us, that the disciples of the infidel philosophy have reversed this process. They take a loftier flight. You seldom find them upon the ground of the historical evidence. It is not in general, upon the weight, or the nature of human testimony, that they venture to pronounce on the credibility of the Christian revelation. It is on the character of that revelation itself. It is on what they conceive to be the absurdity of its doctrines. It is because they see something in the nature or dispensation of Christianity, which they think disparaging to the attributes of God, and not agreeable to that line of proceeding which the Almighty should observe in the government of his creatures. Rosseau expresses his astonishment at the strength of the historical testimony; so strong, that the inventor of the narrative appeared to him to be more miraculous than the hero. But the absurdities of this said revelation are sufficient in his mind to bear down the whole weight of its direct and external evidences. There was something in the doc-

trines of the New Testament repulsive to the taste and the imagination, and perhaps even to the convictions of this interesting enthusiast. He could not reconcile them with his pre-established conceptions of the divine character and mode of operation. To submit to these doctrines, he behoved to surrender that theism, which the powers of his ardent mind had wrought up into a most beautiful and delicious speculation. Such a sacrifice was not to be made. It was too painful. It would have taken away from him, what every mind of genius and sensibility esteems to be the highest of all luxuries. It would destroy a system, which had all that is fair and magnificent to recommend it, and mar the gracefulness of that fine intellectual picture, on which this wonderful man had bestowed all the embellishments of feeling, and fancy, and eloquence.

In as far, then, as we can judge of the conduct of man in given circumstances, we would pass a favourable sentence upon the testimony of the apostles. But, says the Deist, I judge of the conduct of God; and what the apostles tell me of him is so opposite to that judgment, that I discredit their testimony. The question at issue between us is, shall we admit the testimony of the apostles, upon the application of principles founded on observation, and as certain as is our experience of human affairs? Or, shall we reject that testimony upon the application of principles that are altogether beyond the range of observation, and as doubtful and imperfect in their nature, as is our experience of the counsels of heaven? In the first argument there is no assumption. We are competent to judge of the behaviour of man in given circumstances. This is a subject completely accessible to observation. The second argument is founded upon assumption entirely. We are not competent to judge of the conduct of the Almighty in given circumstances. Here we are precluded, by the nature of the subject, from the benefit of observation. There is no antecedent experience to guide or to enlighten us. It is not right, for man to assume what is right, or proper, or natural for the Almighty to do. It is not in the mere spirit of piety that we say so; it is in the spirit of the soundest experimental philosophy. The argument of the Christian is precisely what the maxims of Lord Bacon would dispose

us to acquiesce in. The argument of the infidel is precisely that argument which the same maxims would dispose us to reject; and when put by the side of the Christian argument, it appears as crude and as unphilosophical, as do the ingenuous speculations of the schoolmen, when set in opposition to the rigour, and evidence, and precision, which reign in every department of modern science.

The application of Lord Bacon's philosophy to the study of external nature was a happy epoch in the history of physical science. It is not long since this application has been extended to the study of moral and intellectual phenomena. All that we contend for is, that our subject should have the benefit of the same application; and we count it hard while, in every other department of inquiry, a respect for truth is found sufficient to repress the appetite for system-building, that theology, the loftiest and most inaccessible of all the sciences, should still remain infected with a spirit so exploded, and so unphilosophical; and that the fancy, and theory, and unsupported speculation, so current among the Deists and demi-infidels of the day, should be held paramount to the authority of facts, which have come down to us with a weight of evidence and testimony, that is quite unexampled in the history of ancient times.

What is science, but a record of observed phenomena, grouped together according to certain points of resemblance, which have been suggested by an actual attention to the phenomena themselves? We never think of questioning the existence of the phenomena, after we have demonstrated the genuineness and authenticity of the record. After this is demonstrated, the singular or unexpected nature of the phenomena is not suffered to weaken their credibility,—a credibility which can only be destroyed by the authority of our own personal observation, or some other record possessed of equal or superior pretensions. But in none of the inductive sciences is it in the power of a student to verify every thing by his own personal observation. He must put up with the observations of others, brought home to the convictions of his own mind by creditable testimony. In the science of geology, this is eminently the case. In a science of such extent, our principles must be in part founded upon the

observations of others, transmitted to us from a distant country. And in a science, the processes of which are so lengthened in point of time, our principles should also in part be founded on the observations of others, transmitted to us from a remote antiquity. Any observations of our own are so limited, both in point of space and of time, that we never think of opposing their authority to the evidence which is laid before us. Our whole attention is directed to the validity of the record; and the moment that this validity is established, we hold it incumbent upon us to submit our minds to the entire and unmodified impression of the testimony contained in it. Now, all that we ask is, that the same process of investigation be observed in theology, which is held to be so sound and so legitimate in other sciences. In a science of such extent, as to embrace the wide domain of moral and intelligent nature, we feel the littleness of that range to which our own personal observations are confined. We shall be glad, not merely of the information transmitted to us from a distant country, but of the authentic information transmitted to us by any other order of beings, in some distant and unknown part of the creation. In a science, too, which has for its object the lengthened processes of the divine administration, we should like, if any record of past times could enable us to extend our observations beyond the limits of our own ephemeral experience; and if there are any events of a former age possessed of such a peculiar and decisive character, as would help us to some satisfactory conclusion in this greatest and most interesting of the sciences.

On a subject so much above us and beyond us, we would never think of opposing any preconceptions to the evidence of history. We would maintain the humility of the inductive spirit. We would cast about for facts, and events and appearances. We would offer our minds as a blank surface to every thing that came to them, supported by unexceptionable evidence. It is not upon the nature of the facts themselves, that we would pronounce upon their credibility, but upon the nature of that testimony by which they were supported. Our whole attention would be directed to the authority of the record. After this was established, we would surrender our whole understanding to its con-

tents. We would school down every antipathy within us, and disown it as a childish affection, unworthy of a philosopher who professes to follow truth through all the disgusts and discouragements which surround it. There are men of splendid reputation in our enlightened circles, who never attended to this speculation, and who annex to the Gospel of Christ nothing else than ideas of superstition and vulgarity. In braving their contempt, we would feel ourselves in the best element for the display and exercise of the philosophical temper. We would rejoice in the omnipotence of truth, and anticipate, in triumph the victory which it must accomplish over the pride of science, and the fastidiousness of literature. It would not be the enthusiasm of a visionary which would support us, but the inward working of the very same principle which sustained Galileo, when he adhered to the result of his experiments, and Newton, when he opposed his measurements and observations to the tide of prejudice he had to encounter from the prevailing taste and philosophy of the times.

We conceive that inattention to the above principles has led many of the most popular and respected writers in the Deistical controversy to introduce a great deal of discussion that is foreign to the merits of the question altogether; and in this way the attention is often turned away from the point in which the main strength of the argument lies. An infidel, for example, objects against one of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. To repel the objection, the Christian conceives it necessary to vindicate the reasonableness of that doctrine, and to show how consistent it is with all those antecedent conceptions which we derived from the light of natural religion. All this we count superfluous. It is imposing an unnecessary task upon ourselves. Enough for us to have established the authority of the Christian revelation upon the ground of its historical evidence. All that remains is to submit our minds to the fair interpretation of Scripture. Yes; but how do you dispose of the objection drawn from the light of natural religion? In precisely the same way that we would dispose of an objection drawn from some speculative system, against the truth of any physical fact that has been well established by observation or testimony. We would disown

the system, and oppose the obstinacy of the fact to all the elegance and ingenuity of the speculation.

We are sensible that this is not enough to satisfy a numerous class of very sincere and well disposed Christians. There are many of this description, who, antecedent to the study of the Christian revelation altogether, repose a very strong confidence in the light of natural religion, and think that upon the mere strength of its evidence, they can often pronounce with a considerable degree of assurance on the character of the divine administration. To such as these, something more is necessary than the external evidences on which Christianty rests. You must reconcile the doctrines of Christianity with those previous conceptions which the light of nature has given them; and a great deal of elaborate argument is often expended in bringing about this accommodation. It is, of course, a work of greater difficulty, to convince this description of people, though in point of fact, this difficulty has been overcome, in a way the most masterly and decisive, by one of the soundest and most philosophical of our theologians.

To another description of Christians, this attempt to reconcile the doctrines of Christianity with the light of natural religion is superfluous. Give them historical evidence for the truth of Christianity, and all that natural religion may have taught them will fly like so many visionary phantoms before the light of its overbearing authority. With them the argument is reduced to a narrower compass. Is the testimony of the apostles and first Christians sufficient to establish the credibility of the facts which are recorded in the New Testament? The question is made to rest exclusively on the character of this testimony, and the circumstances attending it, and no antecedent theology of their own is suffered to mingle with the investigation. If the historical evidence of Christianity is found to be conclusive, they conceive the investigation to be at an end; and that nothing remains on their part, but an act of unconditional submission to all its doctrines.

Though it might be proper, in the present state of opinion, to accommodate to both these cases, yet we profess ourselves to belong to the latter description of Christians. We hold by the to-

tal insufficiency of natural religion to pronounce upon the intrinsic merits of any revelation, and think that the authority of every revelation rests exclusively upon its external evidences, and upon such marks of honesty in the composition itself as would apply to any human performance. We rest this opinion, not upon any fanatical impression of the ignorance of man, or how sinful it is for a weak and guilty mortal to pronounce upon the counsels of heaven, and the laws of the divine administration. We disown this presumption, not merely because it is sinful, but because we conceive it to be unphilosophical, and precisely analogous to that theorising *a priori* spirit, which the wisdom of Bacon has banished from all the schools of philosophy.

For the satisfaction of the first class, we refer them to that argument which has been prosecuted with so much ability and success by Bishop Butler, in his Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion. It is not so much the object of this author to found any positive argument on the accordancy which subsists between the processes of the divine administration in nature, and the processes ascribed to God by revelation, as to repel the argument founded upon their supposed discordancy. To one of the second class, the argument of Bishop Butler is not called for; but as to one of the first class, we can conceive nothing more calculated to quiet his difficulties. He believes a God, and he must therefore believe the character and existence of God to be reconcileable with all that he observes in the events and phenomena around him. He questions the claims of the New Testament to be a revelation from heaven, because he conceives, that it ascribes a plan and an economy to the Supreme Being, which are unworthy of his character. We offer no positive solution of this difficulty. We profess ourselves to be too little acquainted with the character of God; and that in this little corner of his works, we see not far enough to offer any decision on the merits of a government, which embraces worlds, and reaches eternity. We think we do enough, if we give a sufficiency of external proof for the New Testament being a true and authentic message from heaven; and that therefore nothing remains for us, but to attend and to submit to it. But the argument of Bishop Butler enables us to do still more than this. It

enables us to say, that the very thing objected against in Christianity exists in nature; and that therefore the same God who is the author of nature, may be the author of Christianity. We do not say that any positive evidence can be founded upon this analogy. But in as far as it goes to repel the objection, it is triumphant. A man has no right to retain his theism, if he rejects Christianity upon difficulties to which natural religion is equally liable. If Christianity tells us, that the guilt of a father has brought sufferings and vice upon his posterity, it is what we see exemplified in a thousand instances among the families around us. If it tells us, that the innocent have suffered for the guilty, it is nothing more than what all history and all observation have made perfectly familiar to us. If it tells us of one portion of the human race being distinguished by the sovereign will of the Almighty for superior knowledge, or superior privileges, it only adds one inequality more to the many inequalities which we perceive every day in the gifts of nature, of fortune, and of providence. In short, without entering into all the details of that argument, which Butler has brought forward in a way so masterly and decisive, there is not a single impeachment which can be offered against the God of Christianity, that may not, if consistently proceeded upon, be offered against the God of Nature itself; if the one be unworthy of God, the other is equally so; and if in spite of these difficulties, you still retain the conviction, that there is a God of Nature, it is not fair or rational to suffer them to outweigh all that positive evidence and testimony, which have been adduced for proving that the same God is the God of Christianity also.

CHAP. IX.

ON THE WAY OF PROPOSING THE ARGUMENT TO ATHEISTICAL INFIDELS.

If Christianity be still resisted, it appears to us that the only consistent refuge is Atheism. The very same peculiarities in the dispensation of the Gospel, which lead the infidel to reject it as unworthy of God, go to prove, that nature is unworthy of him, and land us in the meloncholy conclusion, that whatever theory can be offered as to the mysterious origin and existence of the things which be, they are not under the dominion of a supreme and intelligent mind. Nor do we look upon Atheism as a more hopeless species of infidelity than Deism, unless in so far as it proves a more stubborn disposition of the heart to resist every religious conviction. Viewed purely as an intellectual subject, we look upon the mind of an Atheist, as in a better state of preparation for the proofs of Christianity than the mind of a Deist. The one is a blank surface, on which evidence may make a fair impression, and where the finger of history may inscribe its credible and well-attested information. The other is occupied with pre-conceptions. It will not take what history offers to it. It puts itself into the same unphilosophical posture, in which the mind of a prejudiced Cartesian opposed its theory of the heavens to the demonstration and measurements of Newton. The theory of the Deist upon a subject, where truth is still more inaccessible, and speculation still more presumptuous, sets him to resist the only safe and competent evidence that can be appealed to. What was originally the evidence of observation, and is now transformed into the evidence of testimony, comes down to us in a series of historical documents, the closest and most consistent that all antiquity can furnish. It is the unfortunate theory which forms the grand obstacle to the admission of the Christian miracles, and which

leads the Deist to an exhibition of himself so unphilosophical, as that of trampling on the soundest laws of evidence, by bringing an historical fact under the tribunal of a theoretical principle. The deistical speculation of Rousseau, by which he neutralized the testimony of the first Christians, is as complete a transgression against the temper and principles of true science, as a category of Aristotle when employed to overrule an experiment in chemistry. But however this be, it is evident that Rousseau would have given a readier reception to the Gospel history, had his mind not been pre-occupied with the speculation; and the negative state of Atheism would have been more favourable to the admission of those facts which are connected with the origin and establishment of our religion in the world.

This suggests the way in which the evidence for Christianity should be carried home to the mind of an Atheist. He sees nothing in the phenomena around him, that can warrant him to believe in the existence of a living and intelligent principle, which gave birth and movement to all things. He does not say that he would refuse credit to the existence of God upon sufficient evidence, but he says that there are not such appearances of design in nature, as to supply him with that evidence. He does not deny the existence of God to be a possible truth; but he affirms, that while there is nothing before him but the consciousness of what passes within, and the observation of what passes without, it remains an assertion destitute of proof, and can have no more effect upon his conviction than any other non-entity of the imagination. There is a mighty difference between *not proven* and *disproven*. We see nothing in the argument of the Atheists which goes farther than to establish the former sentence upon the question of God's existence. It is altogether an argument *ab ignorantia;* and the same ignorance which restrains them from asserting in positive terms that God exists, equally restrains them from asserting in positive terms that God does not exist. The assertion may be offered, that, in some distant regions of the creation, there are tracts of space which, instead of being occupied like the tracts around us with suns and planetary systems, teem only with animated beings, who, without being supported like us on the firm surface of a world, have the power of spontaneous movements in free spaces.

We cannot say that the assertion is not true, but we can say that it is not proven. It carries in it no positive character either of truth or falsehood, and may therefore be admitted on appropriate and satisfying evidence. But till that evidence comes, the mind is in a state entirely neutral; and such we conceive to be the neutral state of the Atheist, as to what he holds to be the unproved assertion of the existence of God.

To the neutral mind of the Atheist, then, unfurnished as it is with any previous conception, we offer the historical evidence of christianity. We do not ask him to presume the existence of God. We ask him to examine the miracles of the New Testament merely as recorded events, and to admit no other principle into the investigation, than those which are held to be satisfying and decisive, on any other subject of written testimony. The sweeping principle upon which Rosseau, filled with his own assumptions condemned the historical evidence for the truth of the Gospel narrative, can have no influence on the blank and unoccupied mind of an Atheist. He has no presumptions upon the subject; for to his eye the phenomena of nature sit so loose and unconnected with that intelligent Being, to whom they have been referred as their origin, that he does not feel himself entitled, from these phenomena, to ascribe any existence, any character, any attributes, or any method of administration to such a Being. He is therefore in the best possible condition for submitting his understanding to the entire impression of the historical evidence. Those difficulties which perplex the Deist, who cannot recognize in the God of the New Testament the same features and the same principles in which they have invested the God of nature, are no difficulties to him. He has no God of nature to confront with that real though invisible power which lay at the bottom of those astonishing miracles, on which history has stamped her most authentic characters. Though the power which presided there should be an arbitrary, an unjust or a malignant being, all this may startle a Deist, but it will not prevent a consistent Atheist from acquiescing in any legitimate inference, to which the miracles of the Gospel, viewed in the simple light of historical facts, may chance to carry him. He cannot bring his antecedent information into play upon this question. He professes to have no ante-

cedent information on the subject; and this sense of his entire ignorance, which lies at the bottom of his Atheism, would expunge from his mind all that is theoretical, and made it the passive recipient of every thing which observation offers to its notice, or which credible testimony has brought down to it of the history of past ages.

What then, we ask, does the Atheist make of the miracles of the New Testament? If he questions their truth, he must do it upon grounds that are purely historical; he is precluded from every other ground by the very principle on which he has rested his Atheism; and we therefore, upon the strength of that testimony which has been already exhibited, press the admission of these miracles as facts. If there be nothing then, in the ordinary phenomena of nature, to infer a God, do these extraordinary phenomena supply him with no argument? Does a voice from heaven make no impression upon him? And we have the best evidence which history can furnish, that such a voice was uttered; "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." We have the evidence of a fact for the existence of that very Being from whom the voice proceeded, and the evidence of a thousand facts, for a power superior to nature; because, on the impulse of a volition, it counteracted her laws and processes, it allayed the wind, it gave sight to the blind, health to the diseased, and, at the utterance of a voice, it gave life to the dead. The ostensible agent in all these wonderful proceedings gave not only credentials of his power, but he gave such credentials of his honesty, as dispose our understanding to receive his explanation of them. We do not avail ourselves of any other principle than what an Atheist will acknowledge. He understands as well as we do, the natural signs of veracity which lie in the tone, the manner, the countenance, the high moral expression of worth and benevolence, and, above all, in that firm and undaunted constancy, which neither contempt, nor poverty, nor death, could shift from any of its positions. All these claims upon our belief, were accumulated to an unexampled degree in the person of Jesus of Nazareth; and when we couple with them his undoubted miracles, and the manner in which his own personal appearance was followed up by a host of

witnesses, who, after a catastrophe which would have proved a death-blow to any cause of imposture, offered themselves to the eye of the public, with the same powers, the same evidence and the same testimony, it seems impossible to resist his account of the invisible principle, which gave birth and movement to the whole of this wonderful transaction. Whatever Atheism we may have founded on the common phenomena around us, here is a new phenomenon which demands our attention,—the testimony of a man who in addition to evidences of honesty, more varied and more satisfying than were ever offered by a brother of the species, had a voice from the clouds, and the power of working miracles, to vouch for him. We do not think that the account which this man gives of himself can be viewed either with indifference or distrust, and the account is most satisfying. "I proceeded forth, and came from God."—"He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God."—"Even as the Father said unto me so I speak." He had elsewhere said that God was his Father. The existence of God is here laid before us, by an evidence altogether distinct from the natural argument of the schools; and it may therefore be admitted in spite of the deficiency of that argument. From the same pure and unquestionable source we gather our information of his attributes. "God is true."—"God is a spirit." He is omnipotent, "for with God all things are possible." He is intelligent, "for he knoweth what things we have need of." He sees all things, and he directs all things, "for the very hairs of our head are numbered," and "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his permission."

The evidences of the Christian religion are suited to every species of infidelity. We do not ask the Atheist to furnish himself with any previous conception. We ask him to come as he is; and upon the strength of his own favourite principle, viewing it as a pure intellectual question, and abstracting from the more unmanageable tendencies of the heart and temper, we conceive his understanding to be in a high state of preparation, for taking in Christianity in a far purer and more scriptural form, than can be expected from those whose minds are tainted and pre-occupied with their former speculations.

CHAP. X.

ON THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OF REVELATION.

If the New Testament be a message from God, it behooves us to make an entire and unconditional surrender of our minds, to all the duty and to all the information which it sets before us.

There is, perhaps, nothing more thoroughly beyond the cognizance of the human faculties, than the truths of religion, and the ways of that mighty and invisible Being who is the object of it; and yet nothing, we will venture to say, has been made the subject of more hardy and adventurous speculation. We make no allusion at present to Deists, who reject the authority of the New Testament, because the plan and the dispensation of the Almighty, which is recorded there, is different from that plan and that dispensation which they have chosen to ascribe to him. We speak of Christians, who profess to admit the authority of this record, but who have tainted the purity of their profession by not acting upon its exclusive authority; who have mingled their own thoughts and their own fancy with its information; who, instead of repairing in every question, and in every difficulty, to the principle of "What readest thou," have abridged the sovereignty of this principle, by appealing to others, of which we undertake to make out the incompetency; who, in addition to the word of God, talk also of the reason of the thing, or the standard of orthodoxy; and have in fact brought down the Bible from the high place which belongs to it, as the only tribunal to which the appeal should be made, or from which the decision should be looked for.

But it is not merely among partizans or the advocates of a system, that we meet with this indifference to the authority of what is written. It lies at the bottom of a great deal of tha looseness, both in practice and speculation, which we meet with every day in society, and which we often hear expressed

in familiar conversation. Whence that list of maxims which are so indolently conceived, but which, at the same time, are so faithfully proceeded upon? "We have all our passions and infirmities; but we have honest hearts, and that will make up for them. Men are not all cast in the same mould. God will not call us to task too rigidly for our foibles; at least this is our opinion, and God can never be so unmerciful, or so unjust, as to bring us to a severe and unforgiving tribunal for the mistakes of the understanding." Now it is not licentiousness in general, which we are speaking against. It is against that sanction which it appears to derive from the self-formed maxims of him who is guilty of it. It is against the principle, that either an error of doctrine, or an indulgence of passion, is to be exempted from condemnation, because it has an opinion of the mind to give it countenance and authority. What we complain of is, that a man no sooner sets himself forward and says, "this is my sentiment," than he conceives that all culpability is taken away from the error, either of practice or speculation, into which he has fallen. The carelessness with which the opinion has been formed, is of no account in the estimate. It is the mere existence of the opinion, which is pleaded in vindication, and under the authority of *our maxim, and our mode of thinking*, every man conceives himself to have a right to his own way and his own peculiarity.

Now this might be all very fair, were there no Bible and no revelation in existence. But it is not fair, that all this looseness, and all this variety, should be still floating in the world, in the face of an authoritative communication from God himself. Had no message come to us from the Fountain-head of truth, it were natural enough for every individual mind to betake itself to its own speculation. But a message has come to us, bearing on its forehead every character of authenticity; and is it right now, that the question of our faith, or of our duty, should be committed to the capricious variations of this man's taste, or of that man's fancy? Our maxim, and our sentiment! God has put an authoritative stop to all this. He has spoken, and the right or the liberty of speculation no longer remains to us. The question now is, not "What thinkest thou?" In the

days of Pagan antiquity, no other question could be put; and to the wretched delusions and idolatries of that period let us see what kind of answer the human mind is capable of making, when left to its own guidance, and its own authority. But we call ourselves Christians, and profess to receive the Bible as the directory of our faith; and the only question in which we are concerned, is, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?"

But there is a way of escaping from this conclusion. No man calling himself a Christian, will ever disown in words the authority of the Bible. Whatever be counted the genuine interpretation, it must be submitted to. But in the act of coming to this interpretation, it will be observed, there is room for the unwarrantable principles which we are attempting to expose. The business of a scripture critic is to give a fair representation of the sense of all its passages as they exist in the original. Now, this is a process which requires some investigation, and it is during the time that this process is carrying on, that the tendencies and antecedent opinions of the mind are suffered to mislead the inquirer from the true principles of the business in which he is employed. The mind and meaning of the author, who is translated, is purely a question of language, and should be decided upon no other principles than those of grammar or philology. Now, what we complain of is, that while this principle is recognized and acted upon in every other composition which has come down to us from antiquity, it has been most glaringly departed from in the case of the Bible; that the meaning of its author, instead of being made singly and entirely a question of grammar, has been made a question of metaphysics, or a question of sentiment; that instead of the argument resorted to being, "such must be the rendering from the structure of the language, and the import and significancy of its phrases," it has been, "such must be the rendering from the analogy of the faith, the reason of the thing, the character of the Divine mind, and the wisdom of all his dispensations." And whether this argument be formally insisted upon or not, we have still to complain, that in reality it has a most decided influence on the understanding of many a Christian; and in this way, the creed which exists in his mind, instead of being a fair transcript of the

New Testament, is the result of a compromise which has been made between its authoritative decisions and the speculations of his own fancy.

What is the reason why there is so much more unanimity among critics and grammarians about the sense of any ancient author, than about the sense of the New Testament? Because the one is made purely a question of criticism: The other has been complicated with the uncertain fancies of a daring and presumptuous theology. Could we only dismiss these fancies, sit down like a school-boy to his task, and look upon the study of divinity as a mere work of translation, then we would expect the same unanimity among Christians that we meet with among scholars and literati, about the system of Epicurus or the philosophy of Aristotle. But here lies the distinction between the two cases. When we make out, by a critical examination of the Greek of Aristotle, that such was his meaning, and such his philosophy, the result carries no authority with it, and our mind retains the congenial liberty of its own speculations. But if we make out by a critical examination of the Greek of St. Paul, that such is the theology of the New Testament, we are bound to submit to this theology; and our minds must surrender every opinion, however dear to it. It is quite in vain to talk of the mysteriousness of the subject, as being the cause of the want of unanimity among Christians. It may be mysterious, in reference to our former conceptions. It may be mysterious in the utter imposibility of reconciling it with our own assumed fancies, and self-formed principles. It may be mysterions in the difficulty which we feel in comprehending the manner of the doctrine, when we ought to be satisfied with the authoritative revelation which has been made to us of its existence and its truth. But if we could only abandon all our former conceptions, if we felt that our business was to submit to the oracles of God, and that we are not called upon to effect a reconciliation between a revealed doctrine of the Bible, and an assumed or excogitated principle of our own;—then we are satisfied, that we would find the language of the Testament to have as much clear, and precise, and didactic simplicity, as the language of any sage or philosopher that has come down to us.

Could we only get it reduced to a mere question of language, we should look at no distant period for the establishment of a pure and unanimous Christianity in the world. But no. While the mind and the meaning of any philosopher is collected from his words, and these words tried, as to their import and significancy, upon the appropriate principles of criticism, the mind and the meaning of the Spirit of God is not collected upon the same pure and competent principles of investigation. In order to know the mind of the Spirit, the communications of the Spirit, and the expression of these communications in written language, should be consulted. These are the only data upon which the inquiry should be instituted. But, no. Instead of learning the designs and character of the Almighty from his own mouth, we sit in judgment upon them ; and make our conjecture of what they should be, take the precedency of his revelation of what they are. We do him the same injustice that we do to an acquaintance, whose proceedings and whose intentions we venture to pronouncc upon, while we refuse him a hearing, or turn away from the letter in which he explains himself. No wonder, then, at the want of unanimity among Christians, so long as the question of " What thinkest thou ?" is made the principle of their creed, and, for the safe guidance of criticism, they have committed themselves to the endless caprices of the human intellect. Let the principle of " what thinkest thou" be exploded, and that of " what readest thou" be substituted in its place. Let us take our lesson as the Almighty places it before us, and, instead of being the judge of his conduct, be satisfied with the safer and humbler office of being the interpreter of his language.

Now this principle is not exclusively applicable to the learned. The great bulk of Christians have no access to the Bible in its original languages ; but they have access to the common translation, and they may be satisfied by the concurrent testimony of the learned among the different sectaries of this country, that the translation is a good one. We do not confine the principle to critics and translators ; we press it upon all. We call upon them not to form their divinity by independent thinking, but to receive it by obedient reading, to take the words as they stand, and submit to the plain English of the Scriptures which

lie before them. It is the office of a translator to give a faithful representation of the original. Now that this faithful representation has been given, it is our part to peruse it with care and to take a fair and a faithful impression of it. It is our part to purify our understanding of all its previous conceptions. We must bring a free and unoccupied mind to the exercise. It must not be the pride or the obstinacy of self-formed opinions, or the haughty independence of him who thinks he has reached the manhood of his understanding. We must bring with us the docility of a child, if we want to gain the kingdom of heaven. It must not be a partial, but an entire and unexcepted obedience. There must be no garbling of that which is entire, no darkening of that which is luminous, no softening down of that which is authoritative or severe. The Bible will allow of no compromise. It professes to be the directory of our faith, and claims a total ascendency over the souls and the understandings of men. It will enter into no composition with us, or our natural principles. It challenges the whole mind as its due, and it appeals to the truth of heaven for the high authority of its sanctions. "Whosoever addeth to, or taketh from, the words of this book, is accursed," is the absolute language in which it delivers itself. This brings us to its terms. There is no way of escaping after this. We must bring every thought into the captivity of its obedience, and as closely as ever lawyer stuck to his document or his extract, must we abide by the rule and the doctrine which this authentic memorial of God sets before us.

Now we hazard the assertion, that with a number of professing Christians, there is not this unexcepted submission of the understanding to the authority of the Bible; and that the authority of the Bible is often modified, and in some cases superseded by the authority of other principles. One of these principles is the reason of the thing. We do not know if this principle would be at all felt or appealed to by the earliest Christians. It may perhaps by the disputations or the philosophising among converted Jews and Greeks, but not certainly by those of whom Paul said, that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called." They turned from

dumb idols to serve the living and the true God. There was nothing in their antecedent theology which they could have any respect for: Nothing which they could confront, or bring into competition with the doctrines of the New Testament. In those days, the truth as it is in Jesus came to the mind of its disciples, recommended by its novelty, by its grandeur, by the power and recency of its evidences, and above all by its vast and evident superiority over the fooleries of a degrading Paganism. It does not occur to us, that men in these circumstances would ever think of sitting in judgment over the mysteries of that sublime faith which had charmed them into an abandonment of their earlier religion. It rather strikes us, that they would receive them passively; that, like scholars who had all to learn, they would take their lesson as they found it; that the information of their teachers would be enough for them; and that the restless tendency of the human mind to speculation, would for a time find ample enjoyment in the rich and splendid discoveries, which broke like a flood of light upon the world. But we are in different circumstances. To us, these discoveries, rich and splendid as they are, have lost the freshness of novelty. The sun of righteousness, like the sun in the firmament, has become familiarized to us by possession. In a few ages, the human mind deserted its guidance, and rambled as much as ever in quest of new speculations. It is true, that they took a juster and loftier flight since the days of Heathenism. But it was only because they walked in the light of revelation. They borrowed of the New Testament without acknowledgment, and took its beauties and its truths to deck their own wretched fancies and self-constituted systems. In the process of time, the delusion multiplied and extended. Schools were formed, and the ways of the Divinity were as confidently theorized upon, as the processes of chemistry, or the economy of the heavens. Universities were endowed, and natural theology took its place in the circle of the sciences. Folios were written, and the respected luminaries of a former age poured their *a priori* and their *a posteriori* demonstrations on the world. Taste, and sentiment, and imagination, grew apace; and every raw untutored principle which poetry could clothe in pretti-

ness, or over which the hand of genius could throw the graces of sensibility and elegance, was erected into a principle of the divine government, and made to preside over the counsels of the Deity. In the mean time, the Bible which ought to supersede all, was itself superseded. It was quite in vain to say that it was the only authentic record of an actual embassy which God had sent into the world. It was quite in vain to plead its testimonies, its miracles, and the unquestionable fulfilment of its prophesies. These mighty claims must lie over, and be suspended, till we have settled—what? the reasonableness of its doctrines. We must bring the theology of God's ambassador to the bar of our self-formed theology. The Bible, instead of being admitted as the directory of our faith upon its external evidences, must be tried upon the merits of the work itself; and if our verdict be favorable, it must be brought in, not as a help to our ignorance, but as a corollary to our demonstraons. But is this ever done? Yes! by Dr. Samuel Clarke, and a whole host of followers and admirers. Their first step in the process of theological study, is to furnish their minds with the principles of natural theology. Christianity, before its external proofs are looked at or listened to, must be brought under the tribunal of these principles. All the difficulties which attach to the reason of the thing, or the fitness of the doctrines, must be formally discussed, and satisfactorily got over. A voice was heard from heaven, saying of Jesus Christ, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." The men of Gallilee saw him ascend from the dead to the heaven which he now occupies. The men of Gallilee gave their testimony; and it is a testimony which stood the fiery trial of persecution in a former age, and of sophistry in this. And yet, instead of hearing Jesus Christ as disciples, they sit in authority over him as judges. Instead of forming their divinity after the Bible, they try the Bible by their antecedent divinity; and this book, with all its mighty train of evidences, must drivel in their anti-chambers, till they have pronounced sentence of admission, when they have got its doctrines to agree with their own airy and unsubstantial speculations.

We do not condemn the exercise of reason in matters of the-

ology. It is the part of reason to form its conclusions, when it has data and evidences before it. But it is equally the part of reason to abstain from its conclusions, when these evidences are wanting. Reason can judge of the external evidences for Christianity, because it can discern the merits of human testimony: and it can perceive the truth or the falsehood of such obvious credentials as the performance of a miracle, or the fulfilment of a prophecy. But reason is not entitled to sit in judgment over those internal evidences, which many a presumtuous theologian has attempted to derive from the reason of the thing, or from the agreement of the doctrine with the fancied character and attributes of the Deity. One of the most useful exercises of reason, is to ascertain its limits, and to keep within them; to abandon the fields of conjecture, and to restrain itself within that safe and certain barrier which forms the boundary of human experience. However humiliating you may conceive it, it is this which lies at the bottom of Lord Bacon's philosophy, and it is to this that modern science is indebted for all her solidity, and all her triumphs. Why does philosophy flourish in our days? Because her votaries have learned to abandon their own creative speculations, and to submit to evidence, let her conclusions be as painful and as unpalatable as they will. Now all that we want, is to carry the same lesson and the same principle into theology. Our business is not to guess, but to learn. After we have established Christianity to be an authentic message from God upon those historical grounds, on which the reason and experience of man entitle him to form his conclusions,—nothing remains for us, but an unconditional surrender of the mind to the subject of the message. We have a right to sit in judgment over the credentials of heaven's ambassador, but we have no right to sit in judgment over the information he gives us. We have no right either to refuse or to modify that information, till we have accommodated it to our previous conceptions.

It is very true that if the truths which he delivered lay within the field of human observation, he brings himself under the tribunal of our antecedent knowledge. Were he to tell us, that the bodies of the planetary system moved in orbits which are

purely circular, we would oppose to him the observations and measurments of astronomy. Were he to tell us, that in winter the sun never shone, and that in summer no cloud ever darkened the brilliancy of his career, we would oppose to him the certain remembrances, both of ourselves and of our whole neighbourhood. Were he to tell us, that we were perfect men, because we were free from passion, and loved our neighbours as ourselves, we would oppose to him the history of our own lives, and the deeply-seated consciousness of our own infirmities. On all these subjects, we can confront him; but when he brings truth from a quarter which no human eye ever explored; when he tells us the mind of the Deity, and brings before us the counsels of that invisible Being, whose arm is abroad upon all worlds, and whose views reach to eternity, he is beyond the ken of eye or of telescope, and we must submit to him. We have no more right to sit in judgment over his information, than we have to sit in judgment over the information of any other visitor, who lights upon our planet, from some distant and unknown part of the universe, and tells us what worlds roll in those remote tracts which are beyond the limits of our astronomy, and how the Divinity peoples them with his wonders. Any previous conceptions of ours are of no more value than the fooleries of an infant; and should we offer to resist or to modify upon the strength of these conceptions, we would be as unsound and as unphilosophical as ever schoolman was with his categories, or Cartesian with his whirlpools of ether.

Let us go back to the first Christians of the Gentile world. They turned from dumb idols to serve the living and the true God. They made a simple and entire transitition from a state as bad, if not worse, than that of entire ignorance, to the Christianity of the New Testament. Their previous conceptions instead of helping them, behooved to be utterly abondoned; nor was there that intermediate step which so many of us think to be necessary, and which we dignify with the name of the rational theology of nature. In those days this rational theology was unheard of; nor have we the slightest reason to believe that they were initiated into its doctrines, before they were looked upon as fit to be taught the peculiarities of the Gospel. They

were translated at once from the absurdities of Paganism to that Christianity which has come down to us, in the records of the evangelical history, and the epistles which their teachers addressed to them. They saw the miracles; they acquiesced in them, as satisfying credentials of an inspired teacher; they took the whole of their religion from his mouth; their faith came by hearing, and hearing by the words of a divine messsenger. This was their process, and it ought to be ours. We do not see the miracles, but we see their reality through the medium of that clear and unsuspicious testimony which has been handed down to us. We should admit them as the credentials of an embassy from God. We should take the whole of our religion from the records of this embassy; and, renouncing the idolatry of our own self-formed conceptions, we should repair to that word, which was spoken to them that heard it, and transmitted to us by the instrumentality of written language. The question with them was, What hearest thou? The question with us is, what readest thou? They had their idols, and they turned away from them. We have our fancies, and we contend, that, in the face of an authoritative revelation from heaven it is as glaring idolatry in us to adhere to them, as it would be were they spread out upon canvas, or chiselled into material form by the hands of a statuary.

In the popular religions of antiquity, we see scarcely the vestige of a resemblance to that academical theism which is delivered in our schools, and figures away in the speculations of our moralists. The process of conversion among the first Christians was a very simple one. It consisted of an utter abandonment of their heathenism, and an entire submission to those new truths which came to them through the revelation of the Gospel, and through it only. It was the pure theology of Christ and of his apostles. That theology which struts in fancied demonstration from a professor's chair, formed no part of it. They listened as if they had all to learn: we listen as if it was our office to judge, and to give the message of God its due place and subordination among the principles which we had previously established. Now these principles were utterly nnknown at the first publication of Christianity. The Galatians, and Cor-

inthians, and Thessalonians, and Philippians, had no conception of them. And yet, will any man say, that either Paul himself, or those who lived under his immediate tuition, had not enough to make them accomplished Christians, or that they fell short of our enlightened selves, in the wisdom which prepares for eternity, because they wanted our rational theology as a stepping-stone to that knowledge which came, in pure and immediate revelation, from the Son of God? The Gospel was enough for them, and it should be enough for us also. Every natural or assumed principle, which offers to abridge its supremacy, or even so much as to share with it in authority and direction, should be instantly discarded. Every opinion in religion should be reduced to the question of, What readest thou? and the Bible be acquiesced in, and submitted to, as the alone directory of our faith, where we can get the whole will of God for the salvation of man.

But is not this an enlightened age? and, since the days of the Gospel, has not the wisdom of two thousand years accumulated upon the present generation? has not science been enriched by discovery? and is not theology one of the sciences? Are the men of this advanced period to be restrained from the high exercise of their powers? and, because the men of a remote and barbarous antiquity lisped and drivelled in the infancy of their acquirements, is that any reason why we should be restricted like so many school-boys to the lesson that is set before us? It is all true that this is a very enlightened age; but on what field has it acquired so flattering a distinction? On the field of experiment. The human mind owes all its progress to the confinement of its efforts within the safe and certain limits of observation, and to the severe restraint which it has imposed upon its speculative tendencies. Go beyond these limits, and the human mind has not advanced a single inch by its own independent exercises. All the philosophy which has been reared by the labour of successive ages, is the philosophy of facts reduced to general laws, or brought under a general description from observed points of resemblance. A proud and wonderful fabric we do allow; but we throw away the very instrument by which it was built, the moment that we cease to

observe, and begin to theorise and excogitate. Tell us a single discovery, which has thrown a particle of light on the details of the divine administration. Tell us a single truth in the whole field of experimental science, which can bring us to the moral government of the Almighty by any other road than his own revelation.

Astronomy has taken millions of suns and of systems within its ample domain; but the ways of God to man stand at a distance as inaccessible as ever; nor has it shed so much as a glimmering over the counsels of that mighty and invisible Being, who sits in high authority over all worlds. The boasted discoveries of modern science are all confined to that field, within which the senses of man can expatiate. The moment we go beyond this field, they cease to be discoveries, and are the mere speculations of the fancy. The discoveries of modern science have, in fact, imparted a new energy to the sentiment in question. They all serve to exalt the Deity, but they do not contribute a single iota to the explanation of his purposes. They make him greater, but they do not make him more comprehensible. He is more shrouded in mystery than ever. It is not himself whom we see, it is his workmanship; and every new addition to its grandeur or to its variety, which philosophy opens to our contemplation, throws our understanding at a greater distance than before, from the mind and conception of the sublime Architect. Instead of the God of a single world, we now see him presiding in all the majesty of his high attributes, over a mighty range of innumerable systems. To our little eye he is wrapt in more awful mysteriousness, and every new glimpse which astronomy gives us of the universe, magnifies, to the apprehension of our mind, that impassable barrier which stands between the counsels of its Sovereign, and those fugitive beings who strut their evanescent hour in the humblest of its mansions. If this invisible Being would only break that mysterious silence in which he has wrapt himself, we feel that a single word from his mouth, would be worth a world of darkling speculations. Every new triumph which the mind of man achieves in the field of discovery, binds us more firmly to our Bible; and by the very proportion in which philosophy multi-

plies the wonders of God, do we prize that book, on which the evidence of history has stamped the character of his authentic communication.

The course of the moon in the heavens has exercised astronomers for a long series of ages, and now that they are able to assign all the irregularities of its period, it may be counted one of the most signal triumphs of the modern philosophy.

The question lay within the limits of the field of observation. It was accessible to measurement, and, upon the sure principles of calculation, men of science have brought forward the confident solution of a problem, the most difficult and trying that ever was submitted to the human intellect. But let it never be forgotten, that those very maxims of philosophy which guided them so surely and so triumphantly within the field of observation, also restrained them from stepping beyond it; and though none were more confident than theyt whenever they had evidence and experiment to enlighten them, yet none were more scrupulous in abstaining to pronounce upon any subject, where evidence and experiment were wanting. Let us suppose that one of their number, flushed with the triumph of success, passed on from the work of calculating the periods of the moon, to theorise upon its chemical constitution. The former question lies within the field of observation, the other is most thoroughly beyond it; and there is not a man, whose mind is disciplined to the rigour and sobriety of modern science, that would not look upon the theory with the same contempt, as if it were the dream of a poet, or the amusement of a schoolboy. We have heard much of the moon, and of the volcanoes which blaze upon its surface. Let us have incontestible evidence, that a falling stone proceeds from the eruption of one of these volcanoes, and the chemistry of the moon will receive more illustration from the analysis of that stone, than from all the speculations of all the theorists. It brings the question in part within the limits of observation. It now becomes a fair subject for the exercise of the true philosophy. The eye can now see, and the hand can now handle it; and the information furnished by the laborious drudgery of experimental men, will be received as a truer do-

cument, than the theory of any philosopher, however ingenious, or however splendid.

At the hazard of being counted fanciful, we bring forward the above as a competent illustration of the principle which we are attempting to establish. We do all homage to modern science, nor do we dispute the loftiness of its pretensions. But we maintain, that however brilliant its career in those tracts of philosophy, where it has the light of observation to conduct it, the philosophy of all that lies without the field of observation is as obscure and inaccessible as ever. We maintain, that to pass from the motions of the moon to an unauthorised speculation upon the chemistry of its materials, is a presumption disowned by philosophy. We ought to feel, that it would be a still more glaring transgression of all her maxims, to pass from the brightest discovery in her catalogue, to the ways of that mysterious Being, whom no eye hath seen, and whose mind is capacious as infinity. The splendour and the magnitude of what we do know, can never authorise us to pronounce upon what we do not know; nor can we conceive a transition more violent or more unwarrantable, than to pass from the truths of natural science to a speculation on the details of God's administration, or the economy of his moral government. We hear much of revelations from heaven. Let any one of these bear the evidence of an actual communication from God himself, and all the reasonings of all theologians must vanish, and give place to the substance of this communication. Instead of theorising upon the nature and properties of that divine light which irradiates the throne of God, and exists at so immeasurable a distance from our faculties, let us point our eyes to that emanation, which has actually come down to us. Instead of theorising upon the counsels of the divine mind, let us go to that volume which lighted upon our world nearly two thousand years ago, and which bears the most authentic evidence, that it is the depository of part of these counsels. Let us apply the proper instrument to this examination. Let us never conceive it to be a work of speculation or fancy. It is a pure work of grammatical analysis. It is an unmixed question of language. The commentator who opens this book with the one hand carries his system

in the other, has nothing to do with it. We admit of no other instrument than the vocabulary and the lexicon. The man whom we look to is the scripture critic, who can appeal to his authorities for the import and significancy of phrases, and whatever be the strict result of his patient and profound philology, we submit to it. We call upon every enlightened disciple of Lord Bacon to approve the steps of this process, and to acknowledge, that the same habits of philosophising to which science is indebted for all her elevation in these latter days, will lead us to cast down all our lofty imaginations, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

But something more remains to be done. The mind may have discernment enough to acquiesce in the speculative justness of a principle; but it may not have vigour or consistency enough to put it into execution. Lord Bacon pointed out the method of true philosophising; yet, in practice, he abandoned it, and his own physical investigations may be ranked among the most effectual specimens of that rash and unfounded theorising, which his own principles have banished from the schools of philosophy. Sir Isaac Newton completed in his own person the character of the true philosopher. He not only saw the general principle, but he obeyed it. He both betook himself to the drudgery of observation, and he endured the pain which every mind must suffer in the act of renouncing its old habits of conception. We call upon our readers to have manhood and philosophy enough to make a similar sacrifice. It is not enough that the Bible be acknowledged as the only authentic source of information respecting the details of that moral economy, which the Supreme Being has instituted for the government of the intelligent beings who occupy this globe. Its authenticity must be something more than acknowledged. It must be felt, and, in act and obedience, submitted to. Let us put them to the test. "Verily I say unto you," says our Saviour, "unless a man shall be born again, he shall not enter into the kingdom of God." "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "Justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." We

need not multiply quotations; but if there be any repugnance to the obvious truths which we have announced to the reader in the language of the Bible, his mind is not yet tutored to the philosophy of the subject. It may be in the way, but the final result is not yet arrived at. It is still a slave to the elegance or the plausibility of its old speculations; and though it admits the principle, that every previous opinion must give way to the supreme authority of an actual communication from God, it wants consistency and hardihood to carry the principle into accomplishment.

DISCOURSES

ON THE

CHRISTIAN REVELATION,

VIEWED IN CONNEXION WITH

THE MODERN ASTRONOMY.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE astronomical objection against the truth of the Gospel does not occupy a very prominent place in any of our Treatises of infidelity. It is often, however, met with in conversation—and we have known it to be the cause of serious perplexity and alarm in minds anxious for the solid establishment of their religious faith.

There is an imposing splendour in the science of astronomy; and it is not to be wondered at, if the light it throws, or appears to throw, over other tracks of speculation than those which are properly its own, should at times dazzle and mislead an inquirer. On this account we think it were a service to what we deem a true and a righteous cause, could we succeed in dissipating this illusion; and in stripping Infidelity of those pretensions to enlargement, and to a certain air of philosophical greatness, by which it has often become so destructively alluring to the young, and the ardent, and the ambitious.

In my first Discourse, I have attempted a sketch of the Modern Astronomy—nor have I wished to throw any disguise over that comparative littleness which belongs to our planet, and which gives to the argument of Freethinkers all its plausibility.

This argument involves in it an assertion and an inference. The assertion is, that Christianity is a religion which professes to be designed for the single benefit of our world; and the inference is, that God cannot be the author of this religion, for he would not lavish on so insignificant a field, such peculiar and such distinguishing attentions as are ascribed to him in the Old and New Testament.

Christianity makes no such profession. That it is designed for the single benefit of our world, is altogether a presumption of the Infidel himself—and feeling that this is not the only example of temerity which can be charged on the enemies of our

faith I have allotted my second Discourse to the attempt of demonstrating the utter repugnance of such a spirit with the cautious and enlightened philosophy of modern times.

In the course of this Sermon I have offered a tribute of acknowledgment to the theology of Sir Isaac Newton; and in such terms, as if not farther explained, may be liable to misconstruction. The grand circumstance of applause in the character of this great man, is, that unseduced by all the magnificence of his own discoveries, he had a solidity of mind which could resist their fascination, and keep him in steady attachment to that book whose general evidences stamped upon it the impress of a real communication from heaven. This was the sole attribute of his theology which I had in my eye when I presumed to eulogize it. I do not think, that, amid the distraction and the engrossment of his other pursuits, he has at all times succeeded in his interpretation of the book; else he would never, in my apprehension, have abetted the leading doctrine of a sect, or a system, which has now nearly dwindled away from public observation.

In my third Discourse I am silent as to the assertion and attempt to combat the inference that is founded on it. I insist, that upon all the analogies of nature and of providence, we can lay no limit on the condescension of God, or on the multiplicity of his regards even to the very humblest departments of creation; and that it is not for us, who see the evidences of divine wisdom and care spread in such exhaustless profusion around, to say, that the Deity would not lavish all the wealth of his wondrous attributes on the salvation even of our solitary species.

At this point of the argument I trust that the intelligent reader may be enabled to perceive in the adversaries of the gospel, a twofold dereliction from the maxims of the Baconian philosophy; that, in the first instance, the assertion which forms the groundwork of their argument, is gratuitously fetched out of an unknown region where they are utterly abandoned by the light of experience; and that, in the second instance, the inference they urge from it, is in the face of manifold and undeniable truths, all lying within the safe and accessible field of human observation.

In my subsequent Discourses, I proceed to the informations of the record. The infidel objection, drawn from astronomy, may be considered as by this time disposed of; and if we have succeeded in clearing it away, so as to deliver the Christian testimony from all discredit upon this ground, then may we submit, on the strength of other evidences, to be guided by its information. We shall thus learn, that Christianity has a far more extensive bearing on the other orders of creation than the infidel is disposed to allow; and whether he will own the authority of this information or not, he will at least, be forced to admit, that the subject matter of the Bible itself is not chargeable with that objection which he has attempted to fasten upon it.

Thus had my only object been the refutation of the Infidel argument, I might have spared the last Discourses of the Volume altogether. But the tracts of Scriptural information to which they directed me, I considered as worthy of prosecution on their own account—and I do think, that much may be gathered from these less observed portions of the field of revelation, to cheer, and to elevate, and to guide the believer.

But, in the management of such a discussion as this, though for a great degree of this effect it would require to be conducted in a far higher style than I am able to sustain, the taste of the human mind may be regaled, and its understanding put into a state of the most agreeable exercise. Now, this is quite distinct from the conscience being made to feel the force of a personal application; nor could I either bring this argument to its close in the pulpit, or offer it to the general notice of the world, without adverting, in the last Discourse, to a delusion which I fear, is carrying forward thousands, and tens of thousands to an undone eternity.

I have closed the Volume with an Appendix of Scriptural authorities. I found that I could not easily interweave them in the texture of the Work, and have, therefore, thought fit to present them it a separate form. I look for a twofold benefit from this exhibition—first, on those more general readers, who are ignorant of the Scriptures, and of the riches and variety which abound in them—and, secondly, on those narrow and intolerant professors, who take an alarm at the very sound and sem-

blance of philosophy, and feel as if there was an utter irreconcileable antipathy between its lessons on the one hand, and the soundness and piety of the Bible on the other. It were well, I conceive, for our cause, that the latter could become a little more indulgent on this subject; that they gave up a portion of those ancient and hereditary prepossessions, which go so far to cramp and to enthral them; that they would suffer theology to take that wide range of argument and of illustration which belongs to her; and that, less sensitively jealous of any desecration being brought upon the Sabbath, or the pulpit, they would suffer her freely to announce all those truths, which either serve to protect Christianity from the contempt of science, or to protect the teachers of Christianity from those invasions which are practised both on the sacredness of the office, and on the solitudes of its devotional and intellectual labours.

I shall only add, for the information of readers at a distance, that these Discourses were chiefly delivered on the occasion of the week-day sermon that is preached in rotation by the Ministers of Glasgow.

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DISCOURSE I.

A SKETCH OF THE MODERN ASTRONOMY.

PSALM viii. 3, 4.

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him."

In the reasonings of the Apostle Paul, we cannot fail to observe how studiously he accommodates his arguments to the pursuits, or principles, or prejudices of the people whom he was addressing. He often made a favourite opinion of their own the starting point of his explanation; and educing a dexterous but irresistible train of argument from some principle upon which each of the parties had a common understanding, did he force them out of all their opposition, by a weapon of their own choosing—nor did he scruple to avail himself of a Jewish peculiarity, or a heathen superstition, or a quotation from Greek poetry, by which he might gain the attention of those whom he laboured to convince, and by the skilful application of which, he might "shut them up unto the faith."

Now, when Paul was thus addressing one class of an assembly or congregation, another class might, for the time, have been shut out of all direct benefit and application from his arguments. When he wrote an Epistle to a mixed assembly of Christianised Jews and Gentiles, he had often to direct such a process of argument to the former, as the latter would neither require nor comprehend. Now, what should have been the conduct of the Gentiles at the reading of that part of the Epistle which bore almost an exclusive reference to the Jews? Should it be impatience at the hearing of something for which they had no relish or understanding? Should it be a fretful disappointment, because every thing that was said, was not said for their edifica-

tion? Should it be angry discontent with the Apostle, because, leaving them in the dark, he had brought forward nothing for them, through the whole extent of so many successive chapters? Some of them may have felt in this way; but surely it would have been vastly more Christian to have sat with meek and unfeigned patience, and to have rejoiced that the great Apostle had undertaken the management of those obstinate prejudices, which kept back so many human beings from the participation of the Gospel. And should Paul have had reason to rejoice, that, by the success of his arguments, he had reconciled one or any number of Jews to Christianity, then it was the part of these Gentiles, though receiving no direct or personal benefit from the arguments, to have blessed God, and rejoiced along with him.

Conceive that Paul were at this moment alive, and zealously engaged in the work of pressing the Christian religion on the acceptance of the various classes of society. Should he not still have acted on the principle of being all things to all men? Should he not have accommodated his discussion to the prevailing taste, and literature, and philosophy of the times? Should he not have closed with the people, whom he was addressing, on some favourite principle of their own; and, in the prosecution of this principle, might he not have got completely beyond the comprehension of a numerous class of zealous, humble, and devoted Christians? Now, the question is not, how these would conduct themselves in such circumstances? but how should they do it? Would it be right in them to sit with impatience, because the argument of the Apostles contained in it nothing in the way of comfort or edification to themselves? Should not the benevolence of the Gospel give a different direction to their feelings? And, instead of that narrow, exclusive, and monopolizing spirit, which I fear is too characteristic of the more declared professors of the truth as it is in Jesus, ought they not to be patient, and to rejoice; when to philosophers, and to men of literary accomplishment, and to those who have the direction of the public taste among the upper walks of society, such arguments are addressed as may bring home to their acceptance also, "the words of this life?" It is under the impulse of these

considerations, that I have, with some hesitation, prevailed upon myself to attempt an argument which I think fitted to soften and subdue those prejudices which lie at the bottom of what may be called the infidelity of natural science; if possible to bring over to the humility of the Gospel, those who expatiate with delight on the wonders and sublimities of creation; and to convince them that a loftier wisdom still than that even of their high and honourable acquirements, is the wisdom of him who is resolved to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

It is truly a most Christian exercise to extract a sentiment, of piety from the works and the appearances of nature. It has the authority of the Sacred Writers upon its side, and even our Saviour himself gives it the weight and the solemnity of his example. "Behold the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin, yet your heavenly Father careth for them." He expatiates on the beauty of a single flower, and draws from it the delightful argument of confidence in God. He gives us to see that taste may be combined with piety, and that the same heart may be occupied with all that is serious in the contemplations of religion, and be at the same time alive to the charms and the loveliness of nature.

The Psalmist takes a still loftier flight. He leaves the world, and lifts his imagination to that mighty expance which spreads above it and around it. He wings his way through space, and wanders in thought over its immeasureable regions. Instead of a dark and unpeopled solitude, he sees it crowded with splendour, and filled with the energy of the Divine presence. Creation rises in its immensity before him, and the world, with all which it inherits, shrinks into littleness at a contemplation so vast and so overpowering. He wonders that he is not overlooked amid the grandeur and the variety which are on every side of him, and passing upward from the majesty of nature to the majesty of nature's Architect, he exclaims, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldest deign to visit him?"

It is not for us to say, whether inspiration revealed to the Psalmist the wonders of the modern astronomy. But even though the mind be a perfect stranger to the science of these

enlightened times, the heavens present a great and an elevating spectacle, an immense concave reposing upon the circular boundary of the world, and the innumerable lights which are suspended from on high, moving with solemn regularity along its surface. It seems to have been at night that the piety of the Psalmist was awakened by this contemplation, when the moon and the stars were visible, and not when the sun had risen in his strength, and thrown a splendour around him, which bore down and eclipsed all the lesser glories of the firmament. And there is much in the scenery of a nocturnal sky, to lift the soul to pious contemplation. That moon, and these stars, what are they? They are detached from the world, and they lift you above it. You feel withdrawn from the earth, and rise in lofty abstraction above this little theatre of human passions and human anxieties. The mind abandons itself to reverie, and is transferred in the ecstacy of its thoughts, to distant and unexplored regions. It sees nature in the simplicity of her great elements, and it sees the God of nature invested with the high attributes of wisdom and majesty.

But what can these lights be? The curiosity of the human mind is insatiable, and the mechanism of these wonderful heavens has, in all ages, been its subject and its employment. It has been reserved for these latter times, to resolve this great and interesting question. The sublimest powers of philosophy have been called to the exercise, and astronomy may now be looked upon as the most certain and best established of the sciences.

We all know that every visible object appears less in magnitude as it recedes from the eye. The lofty vessel as it retires from the coast, shrinks into littleness, and at last appears in the form of a small speck on the verge of the horizon. The eagle with its expanded wings, is a noble object; but when it takes its flight into the upper regions of the air, it becomes less to the eye, and is seen like a dark spot upon the vault of heaven. The same is true of all magnitude. The heavenly bodies appear small to the eye of an inhabitant of this earth, only from the immensity of their distance. When we talk of hundreds of millions, of miles it is not to be listened to as incredible. For remember that we are talking of those bodies which are scattered

over the immensity of space, and that space knows no termination. The conception is great and difficult, but the truth is unquestionable. By a process of measurement which it is unnecessary at present to explain, we have ascertained first the distance, and then the magnitude of some of those bodies which roll in the firmament; that the sun, which presents itself to the eye under so diminutive a form, is really a globe, exceeding, by many thousands of times, the dimensions of the earth which we inhabit; that the moon itself has the magnitude of a world; and that even a few of those stars, which appear like so many lucid points to the unassisted eye of the observer, expand into large circles upon the application of the telescope, and are some of them much larger than the ball which we tread upon, and to which we proudly apply the demonstration of the universe.

Now, what is the fair and obvious presumption? The world in which we live, is a round ball of a determined magnitude, and occupies its own place in the firmament. But when we explore the unlimited tracts of that space, which is every where around us, we meet with other balls of equal or superior magnitude, and from which our earth would either be invisible, or appear as small as any of those twinkling stars which are seen on the canopy of heaven. Why then suppose that this little spot, little at least in the immensity which surrounds it, should be the exclusive abode of life and of intelligence? What reason to think that those mightier globes which roll in other parts of creation, and which we have discovered to be worlds in magnitude, are not also worlds in use and in dignity? Why should we think that the great Architect of nature, supreme in wisdom as he is in power, would call these stately mansions into existence, and leave them unoccupied? When we cast our eye over the broad sea, and look at the country on the other side, we see nothing but the blue land stretching obscurely over the distant horizon. We are too far away to perceive the richness of its scenery, or to hear the sound of its population. Why not extend this principle to the still more distant parts of the universe? What though, from this remote point of observation, we can see nothing but the naked roundness of yon planetary orbs? Are we therefore to say, that they

are so many vast and unpeopled solitudes; that desolation reigns in every part of the universe but ours; that the whole energy of the divine attributes is expended on one insignificant corner of these mighty works; and that to this earth alone belongs the bloom of vegetation, or the blessedness of life, or the dignity of rational and immortal existence?

But this is not all. We have something more than the mere magnitude of the planets to allege, in favour of the idea that they are inhabited. We know that this earth turns round upon itself; and we observe that all those celestial bodies, which are accessible to such an observation, have the same movement. We know that the earth performs a yearly revolution round the sun; and we can detect in all the planets which compose our system, a revolution of the same kind, and under the same circumstances. They have the same succession of day and night. They have the same agreeable vicissitude of the seasons. To them, light and darkness succeed each other; and the gaiety of summer is followed by the dreariness of winter. To each of them the heavens present as varied and magnificent a spectacle; and this earth the encompassing of which would require the labour of years from one of its puny inhabitants, is but one of the lesser lights which sparkle in their firmament. To them, as well as to us, has God divided the light from the darkness, and he has called the light day, and the darkness he has called night. He has said let there be lights in the firmament of their heaven; to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven, to give lights upon their earth; and it was so. And God has also made to them great lights. To all of them he has given the sun to rule the day; and to many of them has he given moons to rule the night. To them he has made the stars also. And God has set them in the firmament of heaven, to give light unto their earth; and to rule over the day, and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God has seen that it was good.

In all these greater arrangements of divine wisdom, we can see that God has done the same things for the accommodation

of the planets that he has done for the earth which we inhabit. And shall we say, that the resemblance stops here, because we are not in a situation to observe it? Shall we say, that this scene of magnificence has been called into being, merely for the amusement of a few astronomers? Shall we measure the counsels of heaven by the narrow importance of the human faculties? or conceive, that silence and solitude reign throughout the mighty empire of nature; that the greater part of creation is an empty parade; and that not a worshipper of the Divinity is to be found through the wide extent of yon vast and immeasurable regions?

It lends a delightful confirmation to the argument, when, from the growing perfection of our instruments, we can discover a new point of resemblance between our earth and the other bodies of the planetary system. It is now ascertained, not merely that all of them have their day and night, and that all of them have their vicissitudes of seasons, and that some of them have their moons to rule their night and alleviate the darkness of it. We can see of one, that its surface rises into inequalities, that it swells into mountains and stretches into valleys; of another, that it is surrounded by an atmosphere which may support the respiration of animals; of a third, that clouds are formed and suspended over it, which may minister to it all the bloom and luxuriance of vegetation; and of a fourth, that a white colour spreads over its northern regions, as its winter advances, and that on the approach of summer this whiteness is dissipated—giving room to suppose, that the element of water abounds in it, that it rises by evaporation into its atmosphere, that it freezes upon the application of cold, that it is precipitated in the form of snow, that it covers the ground with a fleecy mantle, which melts away from the heat of a more vertical sun; and that other worlds bear a resemblance to our own, in the same yearly round of beneficent and interesting changes.

Who shall assign a limit to the discoveries of future ages? Who can prescribe to science her boundaries, or restrain the active and insatiable curiosity of man within the circle of his present acquirements? We may guess with plausibility what we cannot anticipate with confidence. The day may yet be com-

ing, when our instruments of observation shall be inconceivably more powerful. They may ascertain still more decisive points of resemblance. They may resolve the same question by the evidence of sense which is now so abundantly convincing by the evidence of analogy. They may lay open to us the unquestionable vestiges of art, and industry, and intelligence. We may see summer throwing its green mantle over these mighty tracts, and we may see them left naked and colourless after the flush of vegetation has disappeared. In the progress of years, or of centuries, we may trace the hand of cultivation spreading a new aspect over some portion of a planetary surface. Perhaps some large city, the metropolis of a mighty empire, may expand into a visible spot by the powers of some future telescope. Perhaps the glass of some observer, in a distant age, may enable him to construct the map of another world, and to lay down the surface of it in all its minute and topical varieties. But there is no end of conjecture, and to the men of other times we leave the full assurance of what we can assert with the highest probability, that yon planetary orbs are so many worlds, that they teem with life, and that the mighty Being who presides in high authority over this scene of grandeur and astonishment, has there planted the worshippers of his glory.

Did the discoveries of science stop here, we have enough to justify the exclamation of the Psalmist, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldest deign to visit him?" They widen the empire of creation far beyond the limits which were formerly assigned to it. They give us to see that yon sun, throned in the centre of his planetary system, gives light, and warmth, and the vicissitude of seasons, to an extent of surface, several hundreds of times greater than that of the earth which we inhabit. They lay open to us a number of worlds, rolling in their respective circles around this vast luminary—and prove, that the ball which we tread upon, with all its mighty burden of oceans and continents, instead of being distinguished from the others, is among the least of them; and, from some of the more distant planets, would not occupy a visible point in the concave of their firmament. They let us know, that though this mighty earth, with all its myriads of

people, were to sink into annihilation, there are some worlds where an event so awful to us would be unnoticed and unknown, and others where it would be nothing more than the disappearance of a little star which had ceased from its twinkling. We should feel a sentiment of modesty at this just but humiliating representation. We should learn not to look on our earth as the universe of God, but one paltry and insignificant portion of it; that it is only one of the many mansions which the Supreme Being has created for the accommodation of his worshippers, and only one of the many worlds rolling in that flood of light which the sun pours around him to the outer limits of the planetary system.

But is there nothing beyond these limits? The planetary system has its boundary, but space has none; and if we wing our fancy there, do we only travel through dark and unoccupied regions? There are only five, or at most six, of the planetary orbs visible to the naked eye. What, then, is that multitude of other lights which sparkle in our firmament, and fill the whole concave of heaven with innumerable splendours? The planets are all attached to the sun; and, in circling around him, they do homage to that influence which binds them to perpetual attendance on this great luminary. But the other stars do not own his dominion. They do not circle around him. To all common observation, they remain immoveable; and each, like the independent sovereign of his own territory, appears to occupy the same inflexible position in the regions of immensity. What can we make of them? Shall we take our adventurous flight to explore these dark and untravelled dominions? What mean these innumerable fires lighted up in distant parts of the universe? Are they only made to shed a feeble glimmering over this little spot in the kingdom of nature? or do they serve a purpose worthier of themselves, to light up other worlds, and give animation to other systems.

The first thing which strikes a scientific observer of the fixed stars, is their immeasurable distance. If the whole planetary system were lighted up into a globe of fire, it would exceed, by many millions of times, the magnitude of this world, and yet only appear a small lucid point from the nearest of them. If a

body were projected from the sun with the velocity of a cannon-ball, it would take hundreds of thousands of years before it described that mighty interval which separates the nearest of the fixed stars from our sun and from our system. If this earth, which moves at more than the inconceivable velocity of a million and a half miles a day, were to be hurried from its orbit, and to take the same rapid flight over this immense tract, it would not have arrived at the termination of its journey, after taking all the time which has elapsed since the creation of the world. These are great numbers, and great calculations, and the mind feels its own impotency in attempting to grasp them. We can state them in words. We can exhibit them in figures, We can demonstrate them by the powers of a most rigid and infallible geometry. But no human fancy can summon up a lively or an adequate conception—can roam in its ideal flight over this immeasurable largeness—can take in this mighty space in all its grandeur, and in all its immensity—can sweep the outer boundaries of such a creation—or lift itself up to the majesty of that great and invisible arm, on which all is suspended.

But what can those stars be which are seated so far beyond the limits of our planetary system? They must be masses of immense magnitude, or they could not be seen at the distance of place which they occupy. The light which they give must proceed from themselves, for the feeble reflection of light from some other quarter, would not carry through such mighty tracts to the eye of an observer. A body may be visible in two ways. It may be visible from its own light, as the flame of a candle, or the brightness of a fire, or the brilliancy of yonder glorious sun, which lightens all below, and is the lamp of the world. Or it may be visible from the light which falls upon it, as the body which receives its light from the taper that falls upon it—or the whole assemblage of objects on the surface of the earth, which appear only when the light of day rests upon them—or the moon, which, in that part of it which is towards the sun, gives out a silvery whiteness to the eye of the observer, while the other part forms a black and invisible space in the firmament—or as the planets, which shine only because the sun shines upon them, and which, each of them, present the appear-

ance of a dark spot on the side that is turned away from it. Now apply this question to the fixed stars. Are they luminous of themselves, or do they derive their light from the sun, like the bodies of our planetary system? Think of their immense distance, and the solution of this question becomes evident. The sun, like any other body, must dwindle into a less apparent magnitude as you retire from it. At the prodigious distance even of the very nearest of the fixed stars, it must have shrunk into a small indivisible point. In short, it must have become a star itself, and could shed no more light than a single individual of those glimmering myriads, the whole assemblage of which cannot dissipate, and can scarcely alleviate the midnight darkness of our world. These stars are visible to us, not because the sun shines upon them, but because they shine of themselves, because they are so many luminous bodies scattered over the tracts of immensity, in a word, because they are so many suns each throned in the centre of his own dominions, and pouring a flood of light over his own portion of these unlimitable regions.

At such an immense distance for observation, it is not to be supposed, that we can collect many points of resemblance between the fixed stars, and the solar star which forms the centre of our planetary system. There is one point of resemblance, however, which has not escaped the penetration of our astronomers. We know that our sun turns round upon himself, in a regular period of time. We also know, that there are dark spots scattered over his surface, which, though invisible to the naked eye, are perfectly noticeable by our instruments. If these spots existed in greater quantity upon one side than upon another, it would have the general effect of making that side darker, and the revolution of the sun must, in such a case, give us a brighter and a fainter side, by regular alternations. Now, there are some of the fixed stars which present this appearance. They present us with periodical variations of light. From the splendour of a star of the first or second magnitude, they fade away into some of the inferior magnitudes—and one, by becoming invisible might give reason to apprehend that we had lost him altogether—but we can still recognize him by the telescope, till at length he re-appears in his own place, and, after

a regular lapse of so many days and hours, recovers his original brightness. Now, the fair inference from this is, that the fixed stars, as they resemble our sun in being so many luminous masses of immense magnitude, they resemble him in this also, that each of them turns round upon his own axis; so that if any of them should have an inequality in the brightness of their sides, this revolution is rendered evident, by the regular variations in the degree of light which it undergoes.

Shall we say, then, of these vast luminaries, that they were created in vain? Were they called into existence for no other purpose than to throw a tide of useless splendour over the solitudes of immensity? Our sun is only one of these luminaries, and we know that he has worlds in his train. Why should we strip the rest of this princely attendance? Why may not each of them be the centre of his own system, and give light to his own worlds? It is true that we see them not, but could the eye of man take its flight into those distant regions, it should lose sight of our little world, before it reached the outer limits of our system—the greater planets should disappear in their turn —before it had described a small portion of that abyss which separates us from the fixed stars, the sun should decline into a little spot, and all its splendid retinue of worlds be lost in the obscurity of distance—he should, at last, shrink into a small indivisible atom, and all that could be seen of this magnificent system, should be reduced to the glimmering of a little star. Why resist any longer the grand and interesting conclusion? Each of these stars may be the token of a system as vast and as splendid as the one which we inhabit. Worlds roll in these distant regions; and these worlds must be the mansions of life and intelligence. In yon gilded canopy of heaven we see the broad aspect of the universe, where each shining point presents us with a sun, and each sun with a system of worlds—where the Divinity reigns in all the grandeur of his attributes—where he peoples immensity with his wonders; and travels in the greatness of his strength through the dominions of one vast and unlimited monarchy.

The contemplation has no limits. If we ask the number of suns and of systems, the unassisted eye of man can take in a thou-

sand, and the best telescope which the genius of man has constructed can take in eighty millions. Fancy may take its flight far beyond the ken of eye or of telescope. Shall we have the boldness to say, that there is nothing there—that the wonders of the Almighty are at an end—that the creative energy of God has sunk into repose, because the imagination is enfeebled by the magnitude of its efforts?

There are two points of interesting speculation, both of which serve to magnify our conceptions of the universe: If a body be struck in the direction of its centre, it obtains a progressive motion, but without any movement of revolution being at the same time impressed upon it. But, again, should the stroke not be in the direction of the centre—should the line which joins the point of percussion to the centre, make an angle with that line in which the impulse was communicated, then the body is both to go forward in space, also to wheel upon its axis. Thus, each of our planets may have had their compound motion communicated to it by one single impulse; and, on the other hand, if ever the rotatory motion be communicated by one blow, then the progressive motion must go along with it. In order to have the first motion without the second, there must be a twofold force applied to the body in opposite directions. It must be set agoing in the same way as a spinning-top, so as to revolve about an axis, and to keep unchanged its situation in space.

But at this stage of the argument, the matter only remains a conjectural point of speculation. The sun may have had his rotation impressed upon him by a spinning impulse; or, this movement may be coeval with his being, and he may have derived both from an immediate fiat of the Creator. But there is an actually observed phenomenon of the heavens which advances the conjecture into a probability. In the course of age, the stars in one quarter of the celestial sphere are apparently receding from each other; and in the opposite quarter, they are apparently drawing nearer to each other. If the sun be approaching the former and receding from the latter, this phenomenon admits of an easy explanation, and we are furnished with a magnificent step in the scale of the Creator's workmanship. In the same manner as the planets, with their satelites, revolve round

the sun, may the sun, with all his tributaries, be moving in common with other stars, around some distant centre, from which there emanates an influence to bind and to subordinate them all. Our sun may, therefore, be only one member of a higher family—taking his part, along with millions of others, in some loftier system of mechanism, by which they are all subjected to one law, and to one arrangement—describing the sweep of such an orbit in space, and completing the mighty revolution in such a period of time, as to reduce our planetary seasons and our planetary movements, to a very humble and fractionary rank in the scale of a higher astronomy. There is room for all this in immensity; and there is even argument for all this, in the records of actual observation; and, from the whole of this speculation, do we gather a new emphasis to the lesson, how minute is the place, and how secondary is the importance of our world, amid the glories of such a surrounding magnificence!

Another very interesting tract of speculation, has been opened up to us by the more recent observations of astronomy, the discovery of the *nebulæ*. We allow that it is but a dim and indistinct light which this discovery has thrown upon the structure of the universe; but still it has spread before the eye of the mind a field of very wide and lofty contemplation. Before this the universe might appear to have been composed of an indefinite number of suns, about equidistant from each other, and each encompassed by such a planetary attendance as takes place in our own system. But, it now appears instead of lying uniformly and in a state of equidistance from each other, they are arranged into distinct clusters—that, in the same manner as the distance of the nearest fixed stars, marks the separation of the solar systems, so the distance of two contiguous clusters may be so inconceivably superior to the reciprocal distance of those fixed stars which belong to the same cluster, as to mark an equally distinct separation of the clusters, and to constitute each of them an individual member of some higher and more extended arrangement. This carries us upwards through another ascending step in the scale of magnificence, and there leaves us wildering in the uncertainty, whether even here the wonderful progression is ended; and at all events fixes the assured conclusion in our minds, that, to an eye which could spread itself

over the whole, the mansion which accommodates our species might be so very small as to lie wrapped in microscopical concealment; and, in reference to the only Being who possesses this universal eye, well might we say, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldest deign to visit him?"

And, after all, though it be a mighty and difficult conception, yet who can question it? What is seen may be nothing to what is unseen; for what is seen is limited by the range of our instruments. What is unseen has no limit; and, though all which the eye of man can take in, or his fancy can grasp at, were swept away, there might still remain as ample a field, over which the Divinity may expatiate, and which he may have peopled with innumerable worlds. If the whole visible creation were to disappear, it would leave a solitude behind it—but to the infinite Mind, that can take in the whole system of nature, this solitude might be nothing, a small unoccupied point in that immensity which surrounds it, and which he may have filled with the wonders of his omnipotence. Though this earth were to burned up, though the trumpet of its dissolution were sounded, though yon sky were to pass away as a scroll, and every visible glory, which the finger of the Divinity has inscribed on it, were to be put out for ever—an event so awful, to us and to every world in our vicinity, by which so many suns would be extinguished, and so many varied scenes of life and of population would rush into forgetfulness—what is it in the high scale of the Almighty's workmanship? a mere shred, which, though scattered into nothing, would leave the universe of God one entire scene of greatness and of majesty. Though this earth, and these heavens, were to disappear, there are other worlds, which roll afar; the light of other suns shines upon them; and the sky which mantles them, is garnished with other stars. Is it presumption to say, that the moral world extends to these distant and unknown regions? that they are occupied with people? that the charities of home and of neighbourhood flourish there? that the praises of God are there lifted up, and his goodness rejoiced in? that piety has its temples and its offerings? and the richness of the divine attributes is there felt and admired by intelligent worshippers?

And what is this world in the immensity which teems with them—and what are they who occupy it? The univere at large would suffer as little, in its splendour and variety, by the destruction of our planet, as the verdure and sublime magnitude of a forest would suffer by the fall of a single leaf. The leaf quivers on the branch which supports it. It lies at the mercy of the slightest accident. A breath of wind tears it from its stem, and it lights on the stream of water which passes underneath. In a moment of time, the life, which we know, by the microscope, it teems with is extinguished; and, an occurrence, so insignificant in the eye of man, and on the scale of his observation, carries in it, to the myriads which people this little leaf, an event as terrible and as decisive as the destruction of a world. Now, on the grand scale of the universe, we, the occupiers of this ball, which performs its little round among the suns and the systems that astronomy has unfolded—we may feel the same littleness, and the same insecurity. We differ from the leaf only in this circumstance, that it would require the operation of greater elements to destroy us. But these elements exist. The fire which rages within, may lift its devouring energy to the surface of our planet, and transform it into one wide and wasting volcano. The sudden formation of elastic matter in the bowels of the earth—and it lies within the agency of known substances to accomplish this—may explode it into fragments. The exhalation of noxious air from below, may impart a virulence to the air that is around us; it may affect the delicate proportion of its ingredients; and the whole of animated nature may wither and die under the malignity of a tainted atmosphere. A blazing comet may cross this fated planet in its orbit, and realize all the terrors which superstition has conceived of it. We cannot anticipate with precision the consequences of an event which every astronomer must know to lie within the limits of chance and probability. It may hurry our globe towards the sun—or drag it to the outer regions of the planetary system: or give it a new axis of revolution—and the effect which I shall simply announce, without explaining it, would be to change the place of the ocean, and bring another mighty flood upon our islands and continents. These are chan-

ges which may happen in a single instant of time, and against which nothing known in the present system of things provides us with any security. They might not annihilate the earth, but they would unpeople it; and we who tread its surface with such firm and assured footsteps, are at the mercy of devouring elements, which, if let loose upon us by the hand of the Almighty, would spread solitude, and silence, and death over the dominions of the world.

Now, it is this littleness, and this insecurity which make the protection of the Almighty so dear to us, and bring, with such emphasis, to every pious bosom, the holy lessons of humility and gratitude. The God who sitteth above, and presides in high authority over all worlds, is mindful of man; and, though at this moment his energy is felt in the remotest provinces of creation, we may feel the same security in his providence, as if we were the objects of his undivided care. It is not for us to bring our minds up to this mysterious agency. But, such is the incomprehensible fact, that the same Being, whose eye is abroad over the whole universe, gives vegetation to every blade of grass, and motion to every particle of blood which circulates through the veins of the minutest animal; that, though his mind takes into its comprehensive grasp, immensity and all its wonders, I am as much known to him as if I were the single object of his attention; that he marks all my thoughts; that he gives birth to every feeling and every movement within me; and that, with an exercise of power which I can neither describe nor comprehend the same God who sits in the highest heaven and reigns over the glories of the firmament, is at my right hand, to give me every breath which I draw, and every comfort which I enjoy.

But this very reflection has been appropriated to the use of Infidelity, and the very language of the text has been made to bear an application of hostility to the faith. "What is man, that God should be mindful of him, or the son of man, that he should deign to visit him?" Is it likely, says the Infidel, that God would send his eternal Son, to die for the puny occupiers of so insignificant a province in the mighty field of his creation? Are we the befitting objects of so great and so signal an interposi-

tion ? Does not the largeness of that field which astronomy lays open to the view of modern science, throw a suspicion over the truth of the gospel history ; and how shall we reconcile the greatness of that wonderful movement which was made in heaven for the redemption of fallen man, with the comparative meanness and obscurity of our species ?

This is a popular argument against Christianity, not much dwelt upon in books, but we believe, a good deal insinuated in conversation, and having no small influence on the amateurs of a superficial philosophy. At all events, it is right that every such argument should be met, and manfully confronted ; nor do we know a more discreditable surrender of our religion, than to act as if she had any thing to fear from the ingenuity of her most accomplished adversaries. The author of the following treatise, engages in his present undertaking, under the full impression, that a something may be found with which to combat Infidelity in all its forms : that the truth of God and of his message, admits of a noble and decisive manifestation, through every mist which the pride, or the prejudice, or the sophistry of man may throw around it ; and elevated as the wisdom of him may be, who has ascended the heights of science, and poured the light of demonstration over the most wondrous of nature's mysteries, that even out of his own principles, it may be proved how much more elevated is the wisdom of him who sits with the docility of a little child, to his Bible, and casts down to its authority, all his lofty imaginations.

DISCOURSE II.

THE MODESTY OF TRUE SCIENCE.

1 CORINTHIANS vii. 2.

"And if any man thinketh that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

THERE is much profound and important wisdom in that proverb of Solomon, where it is said, that the heart knoweth its own bitterness. It forms part of a truth still more comprehensive, that every man knoweth his own peculiar feelings, and difficulties, and trials, far better than he can get any of his neighbours to perceive them. It is natural to us all, that we should desire to engross, to the uttermost, the sympathy of others with what is most painful to the sensibilities of our own bosom, and with what is most aggravating in the hardships of our own situation. But, labour it as we may, we cannot, with every power of expression, make an adequate conveyance, as it were, of all our sensations, and of all our circumstances, into another understanding. There is a something in the intimacy of a man's own experience, which he cannot make to pass entire into the heart and mind even of the most familiar companion—and thus it is, that he is so often defeated in his attempts to obtain a full and a cordial possession of his sympathy. He is mortified, and he wonders at the obtuseness of the people around him—and how he cannot get them to enter into the justness of his complainings—nor to feel the point upon which turn the truth and the reason of his remonstrances—nor to give their interested attention to the case of his peculiarities and of his wrongs—nor to kindle, in generous resentment along with him, when he starts the topic of his indignation. He does not reflect, all the

while, that, with every human being he addresses, there is an inner man, which forms a theatre of passions, and of interests, as busy, as crowded, and as fitted as his own to engross the anxious and the exercised feelings of a heart, which can alone understand its own bitterness, and lay a correct estimate on the burden of its own visitations. Every man we meet, carries about with him, in the unperceived solitude of his bosom, a little world of his own—and we are just as blind, and as insensible, and as dull, both of perception and of sympathy about his engrossing objects, as he is about ours; and, did we suffer this observation to have all its weight upon us, it might serve to make us more candid, and more considerate of others. It might serve to abate the monopolizing selfishness of our nature. It might serve to soften down all the malignity which comes out of those envious contemplations that we are so apt to cast on the fancied ease and prosperity which are around us. It might serve to reconcile every man to his own lot, and dispose him to bear, with thankfulness, his own burden; and sure I am, if this train of sentiment were prosecuted with firmness, and calmness, and impartiality, it would lead to the conclusion, that each profession in life has its own peculiar pains, and its own besetting inconveniences; that, from the very bottom of society, up to the golden pinnacle which blazons upon its summit, there is much in the shape of care and of suffering to be found—that, throughout all the conceivable varieties of human condition, there are trials, which can neither be adequately told on the one side, nor fully understood on the other—that the ways of God to man are as equal in this, as in every department of his administration—and that, go to whatever quarter of human experience we may, we shall find how he has provided enough to exercise the patience, and to accomplish the purposes of a wise and a salutary discipline upon all his children.

I have brought forward this observation, that it may prepare the way for a second. There are perhaps no two sets of human beings, who comprehend less the movements, and enter less into the cares and concerns of each other, than the wide and busy public on the one hand; and, on the other, those men of close and studious retirement, whom the world never hears of,

save when, from their thoughtful solitude, there issues forth some splendid discovery, to set the world on a gaze of admiration. Then will the brilliancy of a superior genius draw every eye towards it—and the homage paid to intellectual superiority, will place its idol on a loftier eminence than all wealth or than all titles can bestow—and the name of the successful philosopher will circulate, in his own age, over the whole extent of civilized society, and be borne down to posterity in the characters of ever-during remembrance—and thus it is, that, when we look back on the days of Newton, we annex a kind of mysterious greatness to him, who, by the pure force of his understanding, rose to such a gigantic elevation above the level of ordinary men—and the kings and warriors of other days sink into insignificance around him; and he, at this moment, stands forth to the public eye, in a prouder array of glory than circles the memory of all the men of former generations—and, while all the vulgar grandeur of other days is now mouldering in forgetfulness, the achievments of our great astronomer are still fresh in the veneration of his countrymen, and they carry him forward on the stream of time, with a reputation ever gathering, and the triumphs of a distinction that will never die.

Now, the point that I want to impress upon you is, that the same public, who are so dazzled and overborne by the lustre of all this superiority, are utterly in the dark as to what that is which confers its chief merit on the philosophy of Newton. They see the result of his labours, but they know not how to appreciate the difficulty or the extent of them. They look on the stately edifice he has reared, but they know not what he had to do in settling the foundation which give to it all its stability—nor are they aware what painful encounters he had to make, both with the natural predilections of his own heart, and with the prejudices of others, when employed on the work of laying together its unperishing materials. They have never heard of the controversies which this man, of peaceful, unambitious modesty, had to sustain, with all that was proud and all that was intolerant in the philosophy of the age. They have never, in thought, entered that closet which was the scene of his patient and profound exercises—nor have they gone along with him,

as he gave his silent hours to the labours of the midnight oil, and plied that unwearied task, to which the charm of lofty contemplation had allured him—nor have they accompanied him through all the workings of that wonderful mind, from which, as from the recesses of a laboratory, there came forth such gleams and processes of thought as shed an effulgency over the whole amplitude of nature. All this, the public have not done; for of this the great majority, even of the reading and cultivated public, are utterly incapable; and therefore is it that they need to be told what that is, in which the main distinction of his philosophy lies; that when labouring in other fields of investigation, they may know how to borrow from his safe example, and how to profit by that superior wisdom which marked the whole conduct of his understanding.

Let it be understood, then, that they are the positive discoveries of Newton, which, in the eye of a superficial public, confer upon him all his reputation. He discovered the mechanism of the planetary system. He discovered the composition of light. He discovered the cause of those alternate movements which take place on the waters of the ocean. These form his actual and his visible achievements. These are what the world look at as the monuments of his greatness. These are doctrines by which he has enriched the field of philosophy; and thus it is that the whole of his merit is supposed to lie in having had the sagacity to perceive, and the vigour to lay hold of the proofs, which conferred upon these doctrines all the establishment of a most rigid and conclusive demonstration.

But, while he gets all his credit, and all his admiration for those articles of science which he has added to the creed of philosophers, he deserves as much credit and admiration for those articles which he kept out of this creed, as for those which he introduced into it. It was the property of his mind, that it kept a tenacious hold of every one position which had proof to substantiate it—but it forms a property equally characteristic, and which, in fact, gives its leading peculiarity to the whole spirit and style of his investigations, that he put a most determined exclusion on every one position that was destitute of such proof. He would not admit the astronomical theories of those

who went before him, because they had no proof. He would not give in to their notions about the planets wheeling their rounds in whirlpools of ether—for he did not see this ether—he had no proof of its existence—and, besides, even supposing it to exist, it would not have impressed, on the heavenly bodies, such movements as met his observation. He would not submit his judgment to the reigning systems of the day—for, though they had authority to recommend them, they had no proof: and thus it is, that he evinced the strength and the soundness of his philosophy, as much by his decisions upon those doctrines of science which he rejected, as by his demonstration of those doctrines of science which he was the first to propose, and which now stand out to the eye of posterity as the only monuments to the force and superiority of his understanding.

He wanted no other recommendation for any one article of science, than the recommendation of evidence—and, with this recommendation, he opened to it the chamber of his mind, though authority scowled upon it, and taste was disgusted by it, and fashion was ashamed of it, and all the beauteous speculation of former days was cruelly broken up by this new announcement of the better philosophy, and scattered like the fragments of an aerial vision, over which the past generations of the world had been slumbering their profound and their pleasing reverie. But, on the other hand, should the article of science want the recommendation of evidence, he shut against it all the avenues of his understanding—aye, and though all antiquity lent their suffrages to it, and all eloquence had thrown around it the most attractive brilliancy, and all habit had incorporated it with every system of every seminary in Europe, and all fancy had arrayed it in graces of the most tempting solicitation; yet was the steady and inflexible mind of Newton proof against this whole weight of authority and allurement, and, casting his cold and unwelcome look at the specious plausibility, he rebuked it from his presence. The strength of his philosophy lay as much in refusing admittance to that which wanted evidence, as in giving a place and an occupancy to that which possessed it. In that march of intellect, which led him onwards through the rich and magnificent field of his discoveries, he pondered every step;

and, while he advanced with a firm and assured movement, wherever the light of evidence carried him, he never suffered any glare of imagination or prejudice to seduce him from his path.

Sure I am, that, in the prosecution of his wonderful career, he found himself on a way beset with temptation upon every side of him. It was not merely that he had the reigning taste and philosophy of the times to contend with; but, he expatiated on a lofty region, where, in all the giddiness of success, he might have met with much to solicit his fancy, and tempt him to some devious speculation. Had he been like the majority of other men, he would have broken free from the fetters of a sober and chastised understanding, and, giving wing to his imagination, had done what philosophers have done after him—been carried away by some meteor of their own forming, or found their amusement in some of their own intellectual pictures, or palmed some loose aud confident plausibilities of their own upon the world. But Newton stood true to his principle, that he would take up with nothing which wanted evidence, and he kept by his demonstrations, and his measurements, and his proofs; and, if it be true that he who ruleth his own spirit is greater than he who taketh a city, there was won, in the solitude of his chamber, many a repeated victory over himself, which should give a brighter lustre to his name than all the conquests he has made on the field of discovery, or than all the splendour of his positive achievements.

I trust you understand, how, though it be one of the maxims of the true philosophy, never to shrink from a doctrine which has evidence on its side, it is another maxim, equally essential to it, never to harbour any doctrine when this evidence is wanting. Take these two maxims along with you, and you will be at no loss to explain the peculiarity, which, more than any other, goes both to characterise and to ennoble the philosophy of Newton. What I allude to is, the precious combination of its strength and of its modesty. On the one hand, what greater evidence of strength than the fulfilment of that mighty enterprise, by which the heavens have been made its own, and the mechanism of unnumbered worlds has been brought within the

grasp of the human understanding? Now, it was by walking in the light of sound and competent evidence, that all this was accomplished. It was by the patient, the strenuous, the unfaltering application of the legitimate instruments of discovery. It was by touching that which was tangible, and looking to that which was visible, and computing that which was measureable, and in one word, by making a right and a reasonable use of all that proof which the field of nature around us has brought within the limit of sensible observation. This is the arena on which the modern philosophy has won all her victories, and fulfilled all her wondrous achievements, and reared all her proud and enduring monuments, and gathered all her magnificent trophies to that power of intellect with which the hand of a bounteous heaven has so richly gifted the constitution of our species.

But, on the other hand, go beyond the limits of sensible observation, and, from that moment, the genuine disciples of this enlightened school cast all their confidence and all their intrepidity away from them. Keep them on the firm ground of experiment, and none more bold and more decisive in their announcements of all that they have evidence for—but, off this ground, none more humble, or more cautious of any thing like positive announcements, than they. They choose neither to know, nor to believe, nor to assert, where evidence is wanting; and they will sit, with all the patience of a scholar to his task, till they have found it. They are utter strangers to that haughty confidence with which some philosophers of the day sport the plausibilities of unauthorised speculation, and by which, unmindful of the limit that separates the region of sense from the region of conjecture, they make their blind and their impetuous inroads into a province which does not belong to them. There is no one object to which the exercised mind of a true Newtonian disciple is more familiarized than this limit, and it serves as a boundary by which he shapes, and bounds, and regulates, all the enterprises of his philosophy. All the space which lies within this limit, he cultivates to the uttermost, and it is by such successive labours, that every year which rolls over the world, is witnessing some new contribution to experimental science, and adding to the solidity and aggrandizement of this wonder.

ful fabric. But, if true to their own principle, then, in reference to the forbidden ground which lies without this limit, those very men, who, on the field of warranted exertion, evinced all the hardihood and vigour of a full grown understanding, show, on every subject where the light of evidence is withheld from them, all the modesty of children. They give you positive opinion only when they have indisputable proof—but, when they have no such proof, then they have no such opinion. The single principle of their respect to truth, secures their homage for every one position, where the evidence of truth is present, and, at the same time, begets an entire diffidence about every one position, from which this evidence is disjoined. And thus you may understand, how the first man in the accomplishments of philosophy, which the world ever saw, sat at the book of nature in the humble attitude of its interpreter and its pupil—how all the docility of conscious ignorance threw a sweet and softening lustre around the radiance even of his most splendid discoveries—and, while the flippancy of a few superficial acquirements is enough to place a philosopher of the day on the pedestal of his fancied elevation, and to vest him with an assumed lordship over the whole domain of natural and revealed knowledge; I cannot forbear to do honour to the unpretending greatness of Newton, than whom I know not if there ever lighted on the face of our world, one in the character of whose admirable genius so much force and so much humility were more attractively blended.

I now propose to carry you forward, by a few simple illustrations, to the argument of this day. All the sublime truths of the modern astronomy lie within the field of actual observation, and have the firm evidence to rest upon of all that information which is conveyed to us by the avenue of the senses. Sir Isaac Newton never went beyond this field, without a reverential impression upon his mind, of the precariousness of the ground on which he was standing. On this ground, he never ventured a positive affirmation—but, resigning the lofty tone of demonstration, and putting on the modesty of conscious ignorance, he brought forward all he had to say in the humble form of a doubt, or a conjecture, or a question. But, what he had not confidence to do,

other philosophers have done after him—and they have winged their audacious way into forbidden regions—and they have crossed that circle by which the field of observation is enclosed—and there have they debated and dogmatized with all the pride of a most intolerant assurance.

Now, though the case be imaginary, let us conceive, for the sake of illustration, that one of these philosophers made so extravagant a departure from the sobriety of experimental science, as to pass from the astronomy of the different planets, and to attempt the natural history of their animal and vegetable kingdoms. He might get hold of some vague and general analogies, to throw an air of plausibility around his speculation. He might pass from the botany of the different regions of the globe that we inhabit, and make his loose and confident application to each of the other planets, according to its distance from the sun, and the inclination of its axis to the plane of its annual revolution; and out of some such slender materials, he may work up an amusing philosophical romance, full of ingenuity, and having withal, the colour of truth and of consistency spread over it.

I can conceive how a superficial public might be delighted by the eloquence of such a composition, and even be impressed by its arguments; but were I asked, which is the man of all the ages and countries in the world, who would have the least respect for this treatise upon the plants which grow on the surface of Jupiter, I should be at no loss to answer the question. I should say, that it would be he who had computed the motions of Jupiter—that it would be he who had measured the bulk and the density of Jupiter—that it would be he who had estimated the periods of Jupiter—that it would be he whose observant eye and patiently calculating mind, had traced the satellites of Jupiter through all the rounds of their mazy circulation, and unravelled the intricacy of all their movements. He would see at once that the subject lay at a hopeless distance beyond the field of legitimate observation. It would be quite enough for him, that it was beyond the range of his telescope. On this ground, and on this ground only, would he reject it as one of the puniest imbecilities of childhood. As to any charac-

ter of truth or of importance, it would have no more effect on such a mind as that of Newton, than any illusion of poetry; and from the eminence of his intellectual throne, would he cast a penetrating glance at the whole speculation, and bid its gaudy insignificance away from him.

But let us pass onward to another case, which, though as imaginary as the former, may still serve the purpose of illustration.

This same adventurous philosopher may be conceived to shift his speculation from the plants of another world to the character of its inhabitants. He may avail himself of some slender correspondencies between the heat of the sun and the moral temperament of the people it shines upon. He may work up a theory, which carries on the front of it some of the characters of plausibility: but surely it does not require the philosophy of Newton to demonstrate the folly of such an enterprise. There is not a man of plain understanding, who does not perceive that this said ambitious inquirer has got without his reach—that he has stepped beyond the field of experience, and is now expatiating on the field of imagination—that he has ventured on a dark unknown, where the wisest of all philosophy, is the philosophy of silence, and a profession of ignorance is the best evidence, of a solid understanding; that if he thinks he knows any thing on such a subject as this, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. He knows not what Newton knew, and what he kept a steady eye upon throughout the whole march of his sublime investigations. He knows not the limit of his own faculties. He has overleaped the barrier which hems in all the possibilities of human attainment. He has wantonly flung himself off from the safe and firm field of observation, and got on that undiscoverable ground, where, by every step he takes, he widens his distance from the true philosophy, and by every affirmation he utters, he rebels against the authority of all its maxims.

I can conceive it the feeling of every one of you, that I have hitherto indulged in a vain expense of argument, and it is most natural for you to put the question, "What is the precise point

of convergence to which I am directing all the light of this abundant and seemingly superfluous illustration?"

In the astronomical objection which infidelity has proposed against the truth of the Christian revelation, there is first an assertion, and then an argumeut. The assertion is, that Christianity is set up for the exclusive benefit of our minute and solitary world. The argument is, that God would not lavish such a quantity of attention on so insignificant a field. Even though the assertion were admitted, I should have a quarrel with the argument. But the futility of the objection is not laid open in all its extent, unless we expose the utter want of all essential evidence even for the truth of the assertion. How do infidels know that Christianity is set up for the single benefit of this earth and its inhabitants? How are they able to tell us, that if you go to other planets, the person and the religion of Jesus, are there unknown to them? We challenge them to the proof of this said positive announcement of theirs. We see in this objection the same rash and gratuitous procedure, which was so apparent in the two cases that we have already advanced for the purpose of illustration. We see in it the same glaring transgression on the spirit and the maxims of that very philosophy which they profess to idolize. They have made their argument against us, out of an assertion which has positively no feet to rest upon—an assertion which they have no means whatever of verifying—an assertion, the truth or the falsehood of which can only be gathered out of some supernatural message, for it lies completely beyond the range of human observation. It is willingly admitted, that by an attempt at the botany of other worlds, the true method of philosophising is trampled on; for this is a subject that lies beyond the range of actual observation, and every performance upon it must be made up of assertions without proofs. It is also willingly admitted, that an attempt at the civil and political history of their people, would be an equally extravagant departure from the spirit of the true philosophy; for this also lies beyond the field of actual observation; and all that could possibly be mustered up on such a subject as this, would still be assertions without proofs. Now, the theology of these planets, is, in every way, as inaccessible a subject as their

politics or their natural history; and therefore it is, that the objection, grounded on the confident assumption of those infidel astronomers, who assert Christianity to be the religion of this one world, or that the religion of these other worlds is not our very Christianity, can have no influence on a mind that has derived its habits of thinking from the pure and rigorous school of Newton: for the whole of this assertion is just as glaringly destitute, as in the two former instances, of proof.

The man who could embark in an enterprise so foolish and so fanciful, as to theorise it on the details of the botany of another world, or to theorise it on the natural and moral history of its people, is just making as outrageous a departure from all sense, and science, and all sobriety, when he presumes to speculate, or to assert on the details or the methods of God's administration among its rational and accountable inhabitants. He wings his fancy to as hazardous a region, and vainly strives a penetrating vision through the mantle of as deep an obscurity. All the elements of such a speculation are hidden from him. For any thing he can tell, sin has found its way into these other worlds. For any thing he can tell, their people have banished themselves from communion with God. For any thing he can tell, many a visit has been made to each of them, on the subject of our common Christianity, by commissioned messengers from the throne of the Eternal. For any thing he can tell, the redemption proclaimed to us is not one solitary instance, or not the whole of that redemption which is by the Son of God—but only our part in a plan of mercy, equal in magnificence to all that astronomy has brought within the range of human contemplation. For any thing he can tell, the moral pestilence, which walks abroad over the face of our world, may have spread its desolation over all the planets of all the systems, which the telescope has made known to us. For any thing he can tell, some mighty redemption has been devised in heaven, to meet this disaster in the whole extent and malignity of its visitations. For any thing he can tell, the wonderworking God, who has strewed the field of immensity with so many worlds, and spread the shelter of his omnipotence over them, may have sent a message of love to each, and re-assured the hearts of its despairing peo-

ple by some over-powering manifestation of tenderness. For any thing he can tell, angels from paradise may have sped to every planet their delegated way, and sung, from each azure canopy, a joyful annunciation, and said, "Peace be to this residence, and good will to all its families, and glory to Him in the highest, who, from the eminency of his throne, has issued an act of grace so magnificent, as to carry the tidings of life and of acceptance to the unnumbered orbs of a sinful creation." For any thing he can tell, the Eternal Son, of whom it is said, that by him the worlds were created, may have had the government of many sinful worlds laid upon his shoulders; and by the power of his mysterious word, have awoke them all from that spiritual death, to which they had sunk in lethargy as profound as the slumbers of nonexistence. For any thing he can tell, the one Spirit who moved on the face of the waters, and whose presiding influence it was, that hushed the wild war of nature's elements, and made a beauteous system emerge out of its disjointed materials, may now be working with the fragments of another chaos; and educing order, and obedience, and harmony, out of the wrecks of a moral rebellion, which reaches through all these spheres, and spreads disorder to the uttermost limits of our astronomy.

But, here I stop—nor shall I attempt to grope my dark and fatiguing way, by another inch, among such sublime and mysterious secrecies. It is not I who am offering to lift this curtain. It is not I who am pitching my adventurous flight to the secret things which belong to God, away from the things that are revealed, and which belong to me and to my children. It is the champion of that very infidelity which I am now combating. It is he who props his unchristian argument, by presumptions fetched out of those untravelled obscurites which lie on the other side of a barrier that I pronounce to be impassable. It is he who transgresses the limits which Newton forebore to enter; because, with a justness which reigns throughout all his inquiries, he saw the limit of his own understanding, nor would he venture himself beyond it. It is he who has borrowed from the philosophy of this wondrous man, a few dazzling conceptions, which have only served to bewilder him—while, an utter stran-

ger to the spirit of this philosophy, he has carried a daring and an ignorant speculation far beyond the boundary of its prescribed and allowable enterprises. It is he who has mustered against the truths of the Gospel, resting, as it does, on the evidence within the reach of his faculties, an objection, for the truth of which he has no evidence whatever. It is he who puts away from him a doctrine, for which he has the substantial and the familiar proof of human testimony; and substitutes in its place a doctrine for which he can get no other support than from a reverie of his own imagination. It is he who turns aside from all that safe and certain argument, that is supplied by the history of this world, of which he knows something; and who loses himself in the work of theorising about other worlds, of the moral and theological history of which he positively knows nothing. Upon him, and not upon us, lies the folly of launching his impetuous way beyond the province of observation—of letting his fancy afloat among the unknown of distant and mysterious regions; and by an act of daring, as impious as it is unphilosophical, of trying to unwrap that shroud, which, till drawn aside by the hand of a messenger from heaven, will ever veil, from human eye, the purposes of the Eternal.

If you have gone along with me in the preceding observations, you will perceive how they are calculated to disarm of all its point and all its energy, that flippancy of Voltaire; when, in the examples he gives of the dotage of the human understanding, he tells us of Bacon having believed in witchcraft, and Sir Isaac Newton having written a Commentary on the Book of Revelation. The former instance we shall not undertake to vindicate; but in the latter instance, we perceive what this brilliant and spacious, but withal superficial, apostle of infidelity, either did not see, or refused to acknowledge. We see in this intellectual labourer of our great philosopher, the working of the very same principles which carried him through the profoundest and the most successful of his investigations; and how he kept most sacredly and most consistently by those very maxims, the authority of which he, even in the full vigour and manhood of his faculties, ever recognized. We see in the theology of Newton, the very spirit and principle which gave all its stabil-

ity, and all its sureness, to the philosophy of Newton. We see the same tenacious adherence to every one doctrine, that had such valid proof to uphold it, as could be gathered from the field of human experience; and we see the same firm resistance of every one argument, that had nothing to recommend it, but such plausibilities as could easily be devised by the genius of man, when he expatiated abroad on those fields of creation, which the eye never witnessed, and from which no messenger ever came to us with any credible information. Now, it was on the former of these two principles that Newton clung so determinedly to his Bible, as the record of an actual annunciation from God to the inhabitants of this world. When he turned his attention to this book, he came to it with a mind tutored to the philosophy of facts—and, when he looked at its credentials, he saw the stamp and the impress of this philosophy on every one of them. He saw the fact of Christ being a messenger from heaven, in the audible language by which it was conveyed from heaven's canopy to human ears. He saw the fact of his being an approved ambassador of God, in those miracles which carried their own resistless evidence along with them to human eyes. He saw the truth of this whole history brought home to his own conviction, by a sound and substantial vehicle of human testimony. He saw the reality of that supernatural light, which inspired the prophecies he himself illustrated, by such an agreement with the events of a various and distant futurity as could be taken cognizance of by human observation. He saw the wisdom of God pervading the whole substance of the written message, in such manifold adaptations to the circumstances of man, and to the whole secrecy of his thoughts, and his affections, and his spiritual wants, and his moral sensibilities, as even in the mind of an ordinary and unlettered peasant, can be attested by human consciousness. These formed the solid materials of the basis on which our experimental philosopher stood; and there was nothing in the whole compass of his own astronomy to dazzle him away from it; and he was too well aware of the limit between what he knew and what he did not know, to be seduced from the ground he had taken, by any of those brilliancies which have since led so many of his hum-

bler successors into the track of infidelity. He had measured the distances of these planets. He had calculated their periods. He had estimated their figures, and their bulk, and their densities, and he had subordinated the whole intricacy of their movements to the simple and sublime agency of one commanding principle. But he had too much of the ballast of a substantial understanding about him, to be thrown afloat by all this success among the plausibilities of wanton and unauthorized speculation. He knew the boundary which hemmed him. He knew that he had not thrown one particle of light on the moral or religious history of these planetary regions. He had not ascertained what visits of communication they received from the God who upholds them. But he knew that the fact of a real visit made to this planet, had such evidence to rest upon, that it was not to be disposted by any aerial imagination. And when I look at the steady and unmoved Christianity of this wonderful man; so far from seeing any symptom of dotage and imbecility, or any forgetfulness of those principles on which the fabric of his philosophy is reared; do I see that in sitting down to the work of a Bible Commentator, he hath given us their most beautiful and most consistent exemplification.

I did not anticipate such a length of time, and of illustration, in this stage of my argument. But I will not regret it, if I have familiarised the minds of any of my readers to the reigning principle of this Discourse. We are strongly disposed to think, that it is a principle which might be made to apply to every argument of every unbeliever—and so to serve not merely as an antidote against the infidelity of astronomers, but to serve as an antidote against all infidelity. We are well aware of the diversity of complexion which infidelity puts on. It looks one thing in the man of science and of liberal accomplishment. It looks another thing in the refined voluptuary. It looks still another thing in the common-place railer against the artifices of priestly domination. It looks another thing in the dark and unsettled spirit of him, whose every reflection is tinctured with gall, and who casts his envious and malignant scowl at all that stands associated with the established order of society. It looks another thing in the prosperous man of business, who has nei-

ther time nor patience for the details of the christian evidence —but who, amid the hurry of his other occupations, has gathered as many of the lighter petulancies of the infidel writers, and caught from the perusal of them, as contemptuous a tone towards the religion of the New Testament, as to set him at large from all the decencies of religious observation, and to give him the disdain of an elevated complacency over all the follies of what he counts a vulgar superstition.

And, lastly, for infidelity has now got down among us to the humblest walks of life; may it occasionally be seen lowering on the forehead of the resolute and hardy artificer, who can lift his menacing voice against the priesthood, and, looking on the Bible as a jugglery of theirs, can bid stout defiance to all its denunciations. Now, under all these varieties, we think that there might be detected the one and universal principle which we have attempted to expose. The something, whatever it is, which has dispossessed all these people of their Christianity, exists in their minds, in the shape of a position, which they hold to be true, but which, by no legitimate evidence, they have ever realized—and a position which lodges within them as a wilful fancy or presumption of their own, but which could not stand the touchstone of that wise and solid principle, in virtue of which, the followers of Newton give to observation the precedence over theory. It is a principle altogether worthy of being laboured—as, if carried round in faithful and consistent application among these numerous varieties, it is able to break up all the existing infidelity of the world.

But there is one other most important conclusion to which it carries us. It carries us, with all the docility of children, to the Bible; and puts us down into the attitude of an unreserved surrender of thought and understanding, to its authoritative information. Without the testimony of an authentic messenger from heaven, I know nothing of heaven's counsels. I never heard of any moral telescope that can bring to my observation the doings or the deliberations which are taking place in the sanctuary of the Eternal. I may put into the registers of my belief, all that comes home to me through the senses of the outer man, or by the conciousness of the inner man. But nei-

ther the one nor the other can tell me of the purposes of God; can tell me of the transactions or the designs of his sublime monarchy; can tell me of the goings forth of Him who is from everlasting unto everlasting; can tell me of the march and the movements of that great administration which embraces all worlds, and takes into its wide and comprehensive survey the mighty roll of innumerable ages. It is true that my fancy may break its impetuous way into this lofty and inaccessible field; and through the devices of my heart, which are many, the visions of an ever-shifting theology may take their alternate sway over me; but the counsel of the Lord, it shall stand. And I repeat it, that if true to the leading principle of that philosophy, which has poured such a flood of light over the mysteries of nature, we shall dismiss every self-formed conception of our own, and wait in all the humility of conscious ignorance, till the Lord himself shall break his silence, and make his counsel known, by an act of communication. And now, that a professed communication is before me, and that it has all the solidity of the experimental evidence on its side, and nothing but the reveries of a daring speculation to oppose it, what is the consistent, what is the rational, what is the philosophical use that should be made of this document, but to set me down like a school-boy, to the work of turning its pages, and conning its lessons, and submitting the every exercise of my judgment to its information and its testimony? We know that there is a superficial philosophy, which casts the glare of a most seducing brilliancy around it; and spurns the Bible, with all the doctrine, and all the piety of the Bible, away from it; and has infused the spirit of Antichrist into many of the literary establishments of the age; but it is not the solid, the profound, the cautious spirit of that philosphy, which has done so much to ennoble the modern period of our world; for the more that this spirit is cultivated and understood, the more will it be found in alliance with that spirit, in virtue of which all that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, is humbled, and all lofty imaginations are cast down, and every thought of the heart is brought into the captivity of the obedience of Christ.

DISCOURSE III.

ON THE EXTENT OF THE DIVINE CONDESCENSION.

PSALM CXIII. 5, 6.

"Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high? Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth?"

In our last discourse we attempted to expose the total want of evidence for the assertion of the infidel astronomer—and this reduces the whole of our remaining controversy with him to the business of arguing against a mere possibility. Still, however, the answer is not so complete as it might be, till the soundness of the argument be attended to, as well as the credibility of the assertion—or, in other words, let us admit the assertion, and take a view of the reasoning which has been constructed upon it.

We have already attempted to lay before you the wonderful extent of that space, teeming with unnumbered worlds, which modern science has brought within the circle of its discoveries. We even ventured to expatiate on those tracts of infinity, which lie on the other side of all that eye or that telescope hath made known to us—to shoot afar into those ulterior regions which are beyond the limits of our astronomy—to impress you with the rashness of the imagination, that the creative energy of God had sunk exhausted by the magnitude of its efforts, at that very line, through which the art of man, lavished as it has been on the work of perfecting the instruments of vision, has not yet been able to penetrate: and upon all this we hazarded the assertion, that though all these visible heavens were to rush into annihilation, and the besom of the Almighty's wrath were to

sweep from the face of the universe, those millions, and millions more of suns and of systems, which lie within the grasp of our actual observation—that this event, which, to our eye, would leave so wide, and so dismal a solitude behind it, might be nothing in the eye of Him who could take in the whole, but the disappearance of a little speck from that field of created things, which the hand of his omnipotence had thrown around him.

But to press home the sentiment of the text, it is not necessary to stretch the imagination beyond the limit of our actual discoveries. It is enough to strike our minds with the insignificance of this world, and of all who inhabit it, to bring it into measurement with that mighty assemblage of worlds, which lie open to the eye of man, aided as it has been by the inventions of his genius. When we told you of the eighty millions of suns, each occupying his own independent territory in space, and dispensing his own influences over a cluster of tributary worlds; this world could not fail to sink into littleness in the eye of him who looked to all the magnitude and variety which are around it. We gave you but a feeble image of our comparative insignificance, when we said that the glories of an extended forest would suffer no more from the fall of a single leaf, than the glories of this extended universe would suffer, though the globe we tread, "and all that it inherits, should dissolve." And when we lift our conceptions to Him who has peopled immensity with all these wonders—who sits enthroned on the magnificence of his own works, and by one sublime idea can embrace the whole extent of that boundless amplitude, which he has filled with the trophies of his divinity: we cannot but resign our whole heart to the Psalmist's exclamation of "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldest deign to visit him!"

Now mark the use to which all this has been turned by the genius of infidelity. Such a humble portion of the universe as ours, could never have been the object of such high and distinguishing attentions as Christianity has assigned to it. God would not have manifested himself in the flesh for the salvation of so paltry a world. The monarch of a whole continent, would never move from his capital, and lay aside the splendour of

royalty ; and subject himself for months, or for years, to perils, and poverty, and persecution ; and take up his abode in some small islet of his dominions, which, though swallowed by an earthquake, could not be missed amid the glories of so wide and empire ; and all this to regain the lost affections of a few families upon its surface. And neither would the eternal Son of God—he who is revealed to us as having made all worlds, and as holding an empire, amid the splendours of which the globe that we inherit, is shaded insignificance ; neither would he strip himself of the glory he had with the Father before the world was, and light on this lower scene, for the purpose imputed to him in the New Testament. Impossible, that the concerns of this puny ball, which floats its little round among an infinity of larger worlds, should be of such mighty account in the plans of the Eternal, or should have given birth in heaven to so wonderful a movement, as the Son of God putting on the form of our degraded species, and sojourning among us, and sharing in all our infirmities, and crowning the whole scene of humiliation, by the disgrace and the agonies of a cruel martyrdom.

This has been started as a difficulty in the way of the Christian Revelation ; and it is the boast of many of our philosophical infidels, that by the light of modern discovery, the light of the New Testament is eclipsed and overborne ; and the mischief is not confined to philosophers, for the argument has got into other hands, and the popular illustrations that are now given to the sublimest truths of science, have widely disseminated all the deism that has been grafted upon it ; and the high tone of a decided contempt for the Gospel, is now associated with the flippancy of superficial acquirements : and, while the venerable Newton, whose genius threw open those mighty fields of contemplation, found a fit exercise for his powers in the interpretation of the Bible, there are thousands and tens of thousands, who, though walking in the light which he holds out to them, are seduced by a complacency which he never felt, and inflated by a pride which never entered into his pious and philosophical bosom, and whose only notice of the Bible, is to depreciate, and to deride, and to disown it.

Before entering into what we conceive to be the right answer

to this objection, let us previously observe, that it goes to strip the Deity of an attribute, which forms a wonderful addition to the glories of his incomprehensible character. It is indeed a mighty evidence of the strength of his arm, that so many millions of worlds are suspended on it; but it would surely make the high attribute of his power more illustrious, if, while it expatiated at large among the suns and the systems of astronomy, it could, at the very same instant, be impressing a movement and a direction on all the minuter wheels of that machinery, which is working incessantly around us. It forms a noble demonstration of his wisdom, that he gives unremitting operation to those laws which uphold the stability of this great universe; but it would go to heighten that wisdom inconceivably, if, while equal to the magnificent task of maintaining the order and harmony of the spheres, it was lavishing its inexhaustible resources on the beauties, and varieties, and arrangements, of every one scene, however humble, of every one field, however narrow, of the creation he had formed. It is a cheering evidence of the delight he takes in communicating happiness, that the whole of immensity should be so strewed with the habitations of life and of intelligence; but it would surely bring home the evidence, with a nearer and more affecting impression, to every bosom, did we know, that at the very time his benignant regard took in the mighty circle of created beings, there was not a single family overlooked by him, and that every individual in every corner of his dominions, was as effectually seen to, as if the object of an exclusive and undivided care. It is our imperfection, that we cannot give our attention to more than one object at one and the same instant of time; but surely it would elevate our every idea of the perfections of God, did we know, that while his comprehensive mind could grasp the whole amplitude of nature, to the very outermost of its boundaries, he had an attentive eye fastened on the very humblest of its objects, and pondered every thought of my heart, and noticed every footstep of my goings, and treasured up in his remembrance every turn and every movement of my history.

And, lastly, to apply this train of sentiment to the matter before us; let us suppose that one among the countless myriads

of worlds, should be visited by a moral pestilence, which spread through all its people, and brought them under the doom of a law, whose sanctions were unrelenting and immutable; it were no disparagement to God, should he, by an act of righteous indignation, sweep this offence away from the universe which it deformed—nor should we wonder, though, among the multitude of other worlds from which the ear of the Almighty was regaled with the songs of praise, and the incense of a pure adoration ascended to his throne, he should leave the strayed and solitary world to perish in the guilt of its rebellion. But, tell me, oh! tell me, would it not throw the softening of a most exquisite tenderness over the character of God, should we see him putting forth his every expedient to reclaim to himself those children who had wandered away from him—and, few as they were whon compared with the host of his obedient worshippers, would it not just impart to his attribute of compassion the infinity of the Godhead, that, rather than lose the single world which had turned to its own way, he should send the messengers of peace to woo and to welcome it back again; and, if justice demanded so mighty a sacrifice, and the law behooved to be so magnified and made honourable, tell me whether it would not throw a moral sublime over the goodness of the Deity, should he lay upon his own Son the burden of its atonement, that he might again smile upon the world, and hold out the sceptre of invitation to all its families?

We avow it, therefore, that this infidel argument goes to expunge a perfection from the character of God. The more we know of the extent of nature, should not we have the loftier conception of him who sits in high authority over the concerns of so wide a universe? But, is it not adding to the bright catalogue of his other attributes, to say, that, while magnitude does not overpower him, minuteness cannot escape him, and variety cannot bewilder him; and that, at the very time while the mind of the Deity is abroad over the whole vastness of creation, there is not one particle of matter, there is not one individual principle of rational or of animal existence, there is not one single world in that expanse which teems with them, that his eye does not discern as constantly, and his hand does not

guide as unerringly, and his spirit does not watch and care for as vigilantly, as if it formed the one and exclusive object of his attention.

The thing is inconceivable to us, whose minds are so easily distracted by a number of objects, and this is the secret principle of the whole infidelity I am now alluding to. To bring God to the level of our own comprehension, we would clothe him in the impotency of a man. We would transfer to his wonderful mind all the imperfection of our own faculties. When we are taught by astronomy, that he has millions of worlds to look after, and thus add in one direction to the glories of his character; we take away from them in another, by saying, that each of these worlds must be looked after imperfectly. The use that we make of a discovery, which should heighten our every conception of God, and humble us into the sentiment, that a Being of such mysterious elevation is to us unfathomable, is to sit in judgment over him, aye, and to pronounce such a judgment as degrades him, and keeps him down to the standard of our own paltry imagination! We are introduced by modern science to a multitude of other suns and of other systems; and the perverse interpretation we put upon the fact, that God *can* diffuse the benefits of his power and of his goodness over such a variety of worlds, is, that he *cannot*, or will not, bestow so much goodness on one of those worlds, as a professed revelation from Heaven has announced to us. While we enlarge the provinces of his empire, we tarnish all the glory of this enlargement, by saying, he has so much to care for, that the care of every one province must be less complete, and less vigilant, and less effectual, than it would otherwise have been. By the discoveries of modern science, we multiply the places of the creation; but along with this, we would impair the attribute of his eye being in every place to behold the evil and the good; and thus, while we magnify one of his perfections, we do it at the expense of another; and to bring him within the grasp of our feeble capacity, would deface one of the glories of that character, which it is our part to adore, as higher than all thought, and as greater than all comprehension.

The objection we are discussing, I shall state again in a sin-

gle sentence. Since astronomy has unfolded to us such a number of worlds, it is not likely that God would pay so much attention to this one world, and set up such wonderful provisions for its benefit, as are announced to us in the Christian Revelation. This objection will have received its answer, if we can meet it by the following position:—that God, in addition to the bare faculty of dwelling on a multiplicity of objects at one and the same time, has this faculty in such wonderful perfection, that he can attend as fully and provide as richly, and manifest all his attributes as illustriously, on every one of these objects, as if the rest had no existence, and no place whatever in his government or in his thoughts. For the evidence of this position, we appeal, in the first place, to the personal history of each individual among you. Only grant us, that God never loses sight of any one thing he has created, and that no created thing can continue either to be or to act independently of him; and then, even upon the face of this world, humble as it is on the great scale of astronomy, how widely diversified and how multiplied into many thousand distinct exercises, is the attention of God! His eye is upon every hour of my existence. His spirit is intimately present with every thought of my heart. His inspiration gives birth to every purpose within me. His hand impresses a direction on every footstep of my goings. Every breath I inhale, is drawn by an energy which God deals out to me. This body, which, upon the slightest derangement, would become the prey of death, or of woful suffering, is now at ease, because he at this moment is warding off from me a thousand dangers, and upholding the thousand movements of its complex and delicate machinery. His presiding influence keeps by me through the whole current of my restless and ever changing history. When I walk by the way side, he is along with me. When I enter into company, amid all my forgetfulness of him, he never forgets me. In the silent watches of the night, when my eyelids have closed, and my spirit has sunk into unconsciousness, the observant eye of him who never slumbers, is upon me. I cannot fly from his presence. Go where I will, he tends me, and watches me, and cares for me; and the same being who is now at work in the remotest domains of Nature

and of Providence, is also at my right hand to eke out to me every moment of my being, and to uphold me in the exercise of all my feelings, and of all my faculties.

Now, what God is doing with me, he is doing with every distinct individual of this world's population. The intimacy of his presence, and attention, and care, reaches to one and to all of them. With a mind unburdened by the vastness of all its other concerns, he can prosecute, without distraction, the government and guardianship of every one son and daughter of the species. —And is it for us, in the face of all this experience, ungratefully to draw a limit around the perfections of God—to aver, that the multitude of other worlds has withdrawn any portion of his benevolence from the one we occupy—or that he, whose eye is upon every separate family of the earth, would not lavish all the riches of his unsearchable attributes on some high plan of pardon and immortality, in behalf of its countless generations?

But, secondly, were the mind of God so fatigued, and so occupied with the care of other worlds, as the objection presumes him to be, should we not see some traces of neglect, or of carelessness, in his management of ours? Should we not behold, in many a field of observation, the evidence of its master being overcrowded with the variety of his other engagements? A man oppressed by a multitude of business, would simplify and reduce the work of any new concern that was devolved upon him. Now, point out a single mark of God being thus oppressed. Astronomy has laid open to us so many realms of creation, which were before unheard of, that the world we inhabit shrinks into one remote and solitary province of his wide monarchy. Tell me, then, if, in any one field of this province, which man has access to, you witness a single indication of God sparing himself—of God reduced to languor by the weight of his other employments—of God sinking under the burden of that vast superintendence which lies upon him—of God being exhausted, as one of ourselves would be, by any number of concerns, however great, by any variety of them, however manifold; and do you not perceive, in that mighty profusion of wisdom and of goodness, which is scattered every where around us, that the

thoughts of this unsearchable Being are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways?

My time does not suffer me to dwell on this topic, because, before I conclude, I must hasten to another illustration. But, when I look abroad on the wondrous scene that is immediately before me—and see, that in every direction it is a scene of the most various and unwearied activity—and expatiate on all the beauties of that garniture by which it is adorned, and on all the prints of design and of benevolence which abound in it—and think, that the same God, who holds the universe, with its every system, in the hollow of his hand, pencils every flower, and gives nourishment to every blade of grass, and actuates the movements of every living thing, and is not disabled, by the weight of his other cares, from enriching the humble department of nature I occupy, with charms and accommodations, of the most unbounded variety—then, surely, if a message, bearing every mark of authenticity, should profess to come to me from God, and inform me of his mighty doings for the happiness of our species, it is not for me, in the face of all this evidence, to reject it as a tale of imposture, because astronomers have told me that he has so many other worlds and other orders of beings to attend to—and, when I think that it were a deposition of him from his supremacy over the creatures he has formed, should a single sparraw fall to the ground without his appointment, then let science and sophistry try to cheat me of my comfort as they may—I will not let go the anchor of my confidence in God—I will not be afraid, for I am of more value than many sparrows.

But thirdly, it was the telescope, that by piercing the obscurity which lies between us and distant worlds, put infidelity in possession of the argument, against which we are now contending. But, about the time of its invention, another instrument was formed, which laid open a scene no less wonderful, and rewarded the inquisitive spirit of man with a discovery, which serves to neutralize the whole of this argument. This was the microscope. The one led me to see a system in every star. The other leads me to see a world in every atom. The one taught me, that this mighty globe, with the whole burden of its

people, and of its countries, is but a grain of sand on the high field of immensity. The other teaches me, that every grain of sand may harbour within it the tribes and the families of a busy population. The one told me of the insignificance of the world I tread upon. The other redeems it from all its insignificance; for it tells me that in the leaves of every forest, and in the flowers of every garden, and in the waters of every rivulet, there are worlds teeming with life, and numberless as are the glories of the firmament. The one has suggested to me, that beyond and above all that is visible to man, there may lie fields of creation which sweep immeasurably along, and carry the impress of the Almighty's hand to the remotest scenes of the universe. The other suggests to me, that within and beneath all that minuteness which the aided eye of man has been able to explore, there may be a region of invisibles; and that could we draw aside the mysterious curtain which shrouds it from our senses, we might there see a theatre of as many wonders as astronomy has unfolded, a universe within the compass of a point so small, as to elude all the powers of the microscope, but where the wonder-working God finds room for the exercise of all his attributes, where he can raise another mechanism of worlds, and fill and animate them all with the evidences of his glory.

Now, mark how all this may be made to meet the argument of our infidel astronomers. By the telescope they have discovered, that no magnitude, however vast, is beyond the grasp of the Divinity. But by the microscope, we have also discovered, that no minuteness, however shrunk from the notice of the human eye, is beneath the condescension of his regard. Every addition to the powers of the one instrument, extends the limit of his visible dominions. But, by every addition to the powers of the other instrument, we see each part of them more crowded than before, with the wonders of his unwearying hand. The one is constantly widening the circle of his territory. The other is as constantly filling up its separate portions, with all that is rich, and various, and exquisite. In a word, by the one I am told that the Almighty is now at work in regions more distant than geometry has ever measured, and among worlds more manifold than numbers have ever reached. But, by the other,

I am also told, that, with a mind to comprehend the whole, in the vast compass of its generality, he has also a mind to concentrate a close and a separate attention on each and on all of its particulars; and that the same God, who sends forth an upholding influence among the orbs and the movements of astronomy, can fill the recesses of every single atom with the intimacy of his presence, and travel, in all the greatness of his unimpaired attributes, upon every one spot and corner of the universe he has formed.

They, therefore, who think that God will not put forth such a power, and such a goodness, and such a condescension, in behalf of this world, as are ascribed to him in the New Testament, because he has so many other worlds to attend to, think of him as a man. They confine their view to the informations of the telescope, and forget altogether the informations of the other instrument. They only find room in their minds for his one attribute of a large and general superintendence, and keep out of their remembrance, the equally impressive proofs we have for his other attribute of a minute and multiplied attention to all that diversity of operations, where it is he that worketh all in all. And then I think, that as one of the instruments of philosophy has heightened our every impression of the first of these attributes, so another instrument has no less heightened our impression of the second of them—then I can no longer resist the conclusion, that it would be a transgression of sound argument, as well as a daring of impiety, to draw a limit around the doings of this unsearchable God—and, should a professed revelation from heaven, tell me of an act of condescension, in behalf of some separate world, so wonderful that angels desired to look into it, and the Eternal Son had to move from his seat of glory to carry it into accomplishment, all I ask is the evidence of such a revelation; for, let it tell me as much as it may of God letting himself down for the benefit of one single province of his dominions, this is no more than what I see lying scattered, in numberless examples, before me; and running through the whole line of my recollections; and meeting me in every walk of observation to which I can betake myself; and, now that the microscope has unveiled the wonders of another

region, I see strewed around me with a profusion which baffles my every attempt to comprehend it, the evidence that there is no one portion of the universe of God too minute for his notice, nor too humble for the visitations of his care.

As the end of all these illustrations, let me bestow a single paragraph on what I conceive to be the precise state of this argument.

It is a wonderful thing that God should be so unincumbered by the concerns of a whole universe, that he can give a constant attention to every moment of every individual in this world's population. But, wonderful as it is, you do not hesitate to admit it as true, on the evidence of your own recollections. It is a wonderful thing that he whose eye is at every instant on so many worlds, should have peopled the world we inhabit with all the traces of the varied design and benevolence which abound in it. But, great as the wonder is, you do not allow so much as the shadow of improbability to darken it, for its reality is what you actually witness and you never think of questioning the evidence of observation. It is wonderful, it is passing wonderful, that the same God, whose presence is diffused through immensity, and who spreads the ample canopy of his administration over all its dwelling-places, should, with an energy as fresh and as unexpended as if he had only begun the work of creation, turn him to the neighbourhood around us, and lavish, on its every hand-breadth, all the exuberance of his goodness, and crowd it with the many thousand varieties of conscious existence. But, be the wonder incomprehensible as it may, you do not suffer in your mind the burden of a single doubt to lie upon it because you do not question the report of the microscope. You do not refuse its information, nor turn away from it as an incompetent channel of evidence. But to bring it still nearer to the point at issue, there are many who never looked through a microscope; but who rest an implicit faith in all its revelations; and upon what evidence, I would ask? Upon the evidence of testimony—upon the credit they give to the authors of the books they have read, and the belief they put in the record of their observations. Now, at this point I make my stand. It is wonderful that God should be so interested in the redemption

of a single world, as to send forth his well-beloved Son upon the errand, and he, to accomplish it, should, mighty to save, put forth all his strength, and travail in the greatness of it. But such wonders as these have already multiplied upon you; and when evidence is given of their truth, you have resigned your every judgment of the unsearchable God, and rested in the faith of them. I demand, in the name of sound and consistent philosophy, that you do the same in the matter before us—and take it up as a question of evidence—and examine that medium of testimony through which the miracles and informations of the Gospel have come to your door—and go not to admit as argument here, what would not be admitted as argument in any of the analogies of nature and observation—and take along with you in this field of inquiry, a lesson which you should have learned upon other fields—even the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, that his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways are past finding out.

I do not enter at all into the positive evidence for the truth of the Christian Revelation, my single aim at present being to dispose of one of the objections which is conceived to stand in the way of it. Let me suppose then that this is done to the satisfaction of a philosophical inquirer, and that the evidence is sustained, and that the same mind that is familiarised to all the sublimities of natural science, and has been in the habit of contemplating God in association with all the magnificence which is around him, shall be brought to submit its thoughts to the captivity of the doctrine of Christ. Oh! with what veneration, and gratitude, and wonder, should he look on the descent of him into this lower world, who made all these things and without whom was not any thing made that was made. What a grandeur does it throw over every step in the redemption of a fallen world, to think of its being done by him who unrobed him of the glories of so wide a monarchy, and came to this humblest of its provinces, in the disguise of a servant, and took upon him the form of our degraded species, and let himself down to sorrows and to sufferings, and to death, for us. In this love of an expiring Saviour to those for whom in agony he poured out his soul, there is a height, and a depth, and a length, and a breadth, more

than I can comprehend; and let me never, never from this moment neglect so great a salvation, or lose my hold of an atonement, made sure by him who cried, that it was finished, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. It was not the visit of an empty parade that he made to us. It was for the accomplishment of some substantial purpose; and, if that purpose is announced, and stated to consist in his dying the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God, let us never doubt of our acceptance in that way of communication with our Father in heaven, which he hath opened and made known to us. In taking to that way, let us follow his every direction with that humility which a sense of all this wonderful condescension is fitted to inspire. Let us forsake all that he bids us forsake. Let us do all that he bids us do. Let us give ourselves up to his guidance with the docility of children, overpowered by a kindness that we never merited, and a love that is unequalled by all the perverseness and all the ingratitude of our stubborn nature —for what shall we render unto him for such mysterious benefits—to him who has thus been mindful of us—to him who thus has deigned to visit us?

But the whole of this argument is not yet exhausted. We have scarcely entered on the defence that is commonly made against the plea which infidelity rests on the wonderful extent of the universe of God, and the insignificancy of our assigned portion of it. The way in which we have attempted to dispose of this plea, is by insisting on the evidence that is every where around us, of God combining with the largeness of a vast and mighty superintendence, which reaches the outskirts of creation, and spreads over all its amplitudes—the faculty of bestowing as much attention, and exercising as complete and manifold a wisdom, and lavishing as profuse and inexhaustible a goodness, on each of its humblest departments, as if it formed the whole extent of his territory.

In the whole of this argument we have looked upon the earth as isolated from the rest of the universe altogether. But according to the way in which the astronomical objection is commonly met, the earth is not viewed as in a state of detachment from the other worlds, and the other orders of being which God

has called into existence. It is looked upon as the member of a more extended system. It is associated with the magnificence of a moral empire, as wide as the kingdom of nature. It is not merely asserted, what in our last Discourse has been already done, that for any thing we can know by reason, the plan of redemption may have its influences and its bearings on those creatures of God who people other regions, and occupy other fields in the immensity of his dominions; that to argue, therefore, on this plan being instituted for the single benefit of the world we live in, and of the species to which we belong, is a mere presumption of the infidel himself; and that the objection he rears on it, must fall to the ground, when the vanity of the presumption is exposed. The Christian apologist thinks he can go further than this—that he cannot merely expose the utter baselessness of the infidel assertion, but that he has positive ground for erecting an opposite and a confronting assertion in its place—and that after having neutralised their position, by showing the entire absence of all observation in its behalf, he can pass on to the distinct affirmative testimony of the Bible.

We do think that this lays open a very interesting track, not of wild and fanciful, but of most legitimate and sober-minded speculation. And anxious as we are to put every thing that bears upon the Christian argument into all its lights; and fearless as we feel for the result of a most thorough sifting of it; and thinking as we do think it, the foulest scorn that any pigmy philosopher of the day should mince his ambiguous skepticism to a set of giddy and ignorant admirers, or that a half-learned and superficial public should associate with the christian priesthood, the blindness and the bigotry of a sinking cause—with these feelings, we are not disposed to blink a single question that may be started on the subject of the Christian evidences. There is not one of its parts or bearings which needs the shelter of a disguise thrown over it. Let the priests of another faith ply their prudential expedients, and look so wise and so wary in the execution of them. But Christianity stands in a higher and a firmer attitude. The defensive armour of a shrinking or timid policy does not suit her. Hers is the naked majesty of truth; and with all the grandeur of age, but with none of

its infirmities, has she come down to us, and gathered new strength from the battles she has won in the many controversies of many generations. With such a religion as this there is nothing to hide. All should be above boards. And the broadest light of day should be made fully and freely to circulate throughout all the secrecies. But secrets she has none. To her belong the frankness and the simplicity of conscious greatness; and whether she grapple it with the pride of philosophy, or stand in fronted opposition to the prejudices of the multitude, she does it upon her own strength, and spurns all the props and all the auxiliaries of superstition away from her.

DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF MAN'S MORAL HISTORY IN THE DISTANT PLACES OF CREATION.

1 PETER i. 12.

"Which things the angels desire to look into."

THERE is a limit, across which man cannot carry any one of his perceptions, and from the ulterior of which he cannot gather a single observation to guide or to inform him. While he keeps by the objects which are near, he can get the knowledge of them conveyed to his mind through the ministry of several of the senses. He can feel a substance that is within reach of his hand. He can smell a flower that is presented to him. He can taste the food that is before him. He can hear a sound of certain pitch and intensity; and, so much does this sense of hearing widen his intercourse with external nature, that, from the distance of miles, it can bring him in an occasional intimation.

But of all the tracks of conveyance which God has been pleased to open up between the mind of man, and the theatre by which he is surrounded, there is none by which he so multiplies his acquaintance with the rich and the varied creation on every side of him, as by the organ of the eye. It is this which gives to him his loftiest command over the scenery of nature. It is this by which so broad a range of observation is submitted to him. It is this which enables him, by the act of a single moment, to send an exploring look over the surface of an ample territory, to crowd his mind with the whole assembly of its objects, and to fill his vision with those countless hues which diver-

sify and adorn it. It is this which carries him abroad over all that is sublime in the immensity of distance; which sets him as it were on an elevated platform, from whence he may cast a surveying glance over the arena of innumerable worlds; which spreads before him so mighty a province of contemplation, that the earth he inhabits, only appears to furnish him with the pedestal on which he may stand, and from which he may descry the wonders of all that magnificence which the Divinity has poured so abundantly around him. It is by the narrow outlet of the eye, that the mind of man takes its excursive flight over those golden tracks, where, in all the exhaustlessness of creative wealth, lie scattered the suns, and the systems of astronomy. But oh! how good a thing it is, and how becoming well, for the philosopher to be humble even amid the proudest march of human discovery, and the sublimest triumphs of the human understanding, when he thinks of that unscaled barrier, beyond which no power, either of eye or of telescope, shall ever carry him: when he thinks that on the other side of it, there is a height, and a depth, and a length, and a breadth, to which the whole of this concave and visible firmament dwindles into the insignificancy of an atom—and above all, how ready should he be to cast his every lofty imagination away from him, when he thinks of the God, who, on the simple foundation of his word, has reared the whole of this stately architecture, and, by the force of his preserving hand, continues to uphold it; aye, and should the word again come out from him, that this earth shall pass away, and a portion of the heavens which are around it, shall again fall back into the annihilation from which he at first summoned them, what an impressive rebuke does it bring on the swelling vanity of science, to think that the whole field of its most ambitious enterprises may be swept away altogether, and there remain before the eye of him who sitteth on the throne, an untravelled immensity, which he hath filled with innumerable splendours, and over the whole face of which he hath inscribed the evidence of his high attributes, in all their might, and in all their manifestation.

But man has a great deal more to keep him humble of his understanding, than a mere sense of that boundary which skirts

and terminates the material field of his contemplations. He ought also to feel how within that boundary, the vast majority of things is mysterious and unknown to him; that even in the inner chamber of his own consciousness, where so much lies hidden from the observation of others, there is also to himself, a little world of incomprehensibles; that if stepping beyond the limits of this familiar home, he look no further than to the members of his family, there is much in the cast and the colour of every mind that is above his powers of divination; that in proportion as he recedes from the centre of his own personal experience, there is a cloud of ignorance and secrecy, which spreads, and thickens, and throws a deep and impenetrable veil over the intricacies of every one department of human contemplation; that of all around him his knowledge is naked and superficial, and confined to a few of those more conspicuous lineaments which strike upon his senses; that the whole face both of nature and of society, presents him with questions which he cannot unriddle, and tells him how beneath the surface of all that the eye can rest upon, there lies the profoundness of a most unsearchable latency; aye, and should he in some lofty enterprise of thought, leave this world, and shoot afar into those tracks of speculation which astronomy has opened—should he, baffled by the mysteries which beset his every footstep upon earth, attempt an ambitious flight towards the mysteries of heaven—let him go, but let the justness of a pious and philosophical modesty go along with him—let him forget not, that from the moment his mind has taken its ascending way for a few little miles above the world he treads upon, his every sense abandons him but one—that number, and motion, and magnitude, and figure, make up all the barrenness of its elementary informations—that these orbs have sent him scarce another message, than told by their feeble glimmering upon his eye, the simple fact of their existence—that he sees not the landscape of other worlds—that he knows not the moral system of any one of them—nor athwart the long and trackless vacancy which lies between, does there fall upon his listening ear, the hum of their mighty populations.

But the knowledge which he cannot fetch up himself from

the obscurity of this wondrous but untravelled scene, by the exercise of any one of his own senses, might be fetched to him by the testimony of a competent messenger. Conceive a native of one of these planetary mansions to light upon our world, and all we should require, would be, to be satisfied of his credentials, that we may tack our faith to every point of information he had to offer us. With the solitary exception of what we have been enabled to gather by the instruments of astronomy, there is not one of his communications about the place he came from, on which we possess any means at all of confronting him; and, therefore, could he only appear before us invested with the characters of truth, we should never think of any thing else than taking up the whole matter of his testimony just as he brought it to us.

It were well had a sound philosophy schooled its professing disciples to the same kind of acquiescence in another message, which has actually come to the world; and has told us of matters still more remote from every power of unaided observation; and has been sent from a more sublime and mysterious distance, even from that God of whom it is said, that "clouds and darkness are the habitation of his throne; and treating of a theme so lofty and so inaccessible, as the counsels of that Eternal Spirit, "Whose goings forth are of old, even from everlasting," challenges of man that he should submit his every thought to the authority of this high communication. Oh! had the philosophers of the day known as well as their great Master, how to draw the vigorous land-mark which verges the field of legitimate discovery, they should have seen when it is that philosophy becomes vain, and science is falsely so called; and how it is, that when philosophy is true to her principles, she shuts up her faithful votary to the Bible, and makes him willing to count all but loss, for the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of him crucified.

But let it be well observed, that the object of this message is not to convey information to us about the state of these planetary regions. This is not the matter with which it is fraught. It is a message from the throne of God to this rebellious province of his dominions; and the purpose of it is, to reveal the fearful extent of our guilt and of our danger, and to lay before us the

overtures of reconciliation. Were a similar message sent from the metropolis of a mighty empire, to one of its remote and revolutionary districts, we should not look to it for much information about the state or economy of the intermediate provinces. This were a departure from the topic on hand—though still there may chance to be some incidental allusions to the extent and resources of the whole monarchy, to the existence of a similar spirit of rebellion in other quarters of the land, or to the general principle of loyalty by which it was pervaded. Some casual references of this kind may be inserted in such a proclamation, or they may not—and it is with this precise feeling of ambiguity that we open the record of that embassy which has been sent us from heaven, to see if we can gather any thing there, about other places of the creation, to meet the objections of the infidel astronomer. But, while we pursue this object, let us have a care not to push the speculation beyond the limits of the written testimony ; let us keep a just and a steady eye on the actual boundary of our knowledge, that, throughout every distinct step of our argument, we might preserve that chaste and unambitious spirit, which characterizes the philosophy of him who explored these distant heavens, and, by the force of his genius, unravelled the secret of that wondrous mechanism which upholds them.

The informations of the Bible upon this subject, are of two sorts—that from which we confidently gather the fact, that the history of the redemption of our species is known in other and distant places of the creation—and that, from which we indistinctly guess at the fact, that the redemption itself may stretch beyond the limits of the world we occupy.

And, here it may shortly be adverted to, that, though we know little or nothing of the moral and theological economy of the other planets, we are not to infer, that the beings who occupy these widely extended regions, even though not higher than we in the scale of understanding, know little of ours. Our first parents, ere they committed that act by which they brought themselves and their posterity into the need of redemption, had frequent and familiar intercourse with God. He walked with them in the garden of paradise ; and there did angels hold their

habitual converse; and, should the same unblotted innocence which charmed and attracted these superior beings to the haunts of Eden, be perpetuated in every planet but our own, then might each of them be the scene of high and heavenly communications, and an open way for the messengers of God be kept up with them all, and their inhabitants be admitted to a share in the themes and contemplations of angels, and have their spirit exercised on those things, of which we are told that the angels desired to look into them; and thus, as we talk of the public mind of a city, or the public mind of an empire—by the well-frequented avenues of a free and ready circulation, a public mind might be formed throughout the whole extent of God's sinless and intelligent creation—and, just as we often read of the eyes of all Europe being turned to the one spot where some affair of eventful importance is going on, there might be the eyes of a whole universe turned to the one world, where rebellion against the Majesty of heaven had planted its standard; and for the re-admission of which within the circle of his fellowship, God, whose justice was inflexible, but whose mercy he had, by some plan of mysterious wisdom, made to rejoice over it, was putting forth all the might, and travelling in all the greatness of the attributes which belonged to him.

But, for the full understanding of this argument, it must be remarked, that, while in our exiled habitation, where all is darkness and rebellion, and enmity, the creature engrosses every heart, and our affections, when they shift at all, only wander from one fleeting vanity to another, it is not so in the habitations of the unfallen. There, every desire and every movement is subordinated to God. He is seen in all that formed, and in all that is spread around them—and, amid the fulness of that delight with which they expatiate over the good and the fair of this wondrous universe, the animating charm which pervades their every contemplatien, is that they behold, on each visible thing, the impress of the mind that conceived, and of the hand that made and that upholds it. Here, God is banished from the thoughts of every natural man, and by a firm and constantly maintained act of usurpation, do the things of sense and of time wield an entire ascendency. There God is all in all. They

walk in his light. They rejoice in the beatitudes of his presence. The veil is from off their eyes, and they see the character of a presiding Divinity in every scene, and in every event to which the Divinity has given birth. It is this which stamps a glory and an importance on the whole field of their contemplations; and when they see a new evolution in the history of created things, the reason they bend towards it so attentive an eye, is, that it speaks to their understanding some new evolution in the purposes of God; some new manifestation of his high attributes—some new and interesting step in the history of his sublime administration.

Now, we ought to be aware how it takes off, not from the intrinsic weight, but from the actual impression of our argument, that this devotedness to God which reigns in other places of the creation, this interest in him as the constant and essential principle of all enjoyment; this concern in the untaintedness of his glory; this delight in the survey of his perfections and his doings, are what the men of our corrupt and darkened world cannot sympathize with.

But however little we may enter into it, the Bible tells us by many intimations, that among those creatures who have not fallen from their allegiance, nor departed from the living God, God is their all—that love to him sits enthroned in their hearts, and fills them with all the ecstacy of an overwhelming affection—that a sense of grandeur never so elevates their souls, as when they look at the might and majesty of the Eternal—that no field of cloudless transparency so enchants them by the blissfulness of its visions, as when at the shrine of infinite and unspotted holiness, they bend themselves in raptured adoration—that no beauty so fascinates and attracts them, as does that moral beauty which throws a softening lustre over the awfulness of the Godhead—in a word, that the image of his character is ever present to their contemplations, and the unceasing joy of their sinless existence lies in the knowledge and the admiration of the Deity.

Let us put forth an effort, and keep a steady hold of this consideration, for the deadness of our earthly imaginations makes an effort necessary; and we shall perceive, that though

the world we live in were the alone theatre of redemption, there is a something in the redemption itself that is fitted to draw the eye of an arrested universe towards it. Surely, surely, where delight in God is the constant enjoyment, and the earnest intelligent contemplation of God is the constant exercise, there is nothing in the whole compass of nature or of history, that can so set his adoring myriads upon the gaze, as some new and wondrous evolution of the character of God. Now this is found in the plan of our redemption; nor, do I see how in any transaction between the great Father of existence, and the children who have sprung from him, the moral attributes of the Deity could, if I may so express myself, be put to so severe and so delicate a test. It is true, that the great matters of sin and of salvation fall without impression, on the heavy ears of a listless and alienated world. But they who, to use the language of the Bible, are light in the Lord, look otherwise at these things. They see sin in all its malignity, and salvation in all its mysterious greatness. Aye, and it would put them on the stretch of all their faculties, when they saw rebellion lifting up its standard against the Majesty of heaven, and the truth and the justice of God embarked on the threatenings he had uttered against all the doers of iniquity, and the honours of that august throne, which has the firm pillars of immutability to rest upon, linked with the fulfilment of the law that had come out from it; and when nothing else was looked for, but that God by putting forth the power of his wrath should accomplish his every denunciation, and vindicate the inflexibility of his government, and by one sweeping deed of vengeance, assert in the sight of all his creatures, the sovereignty which belonged to him—Oh! with what desire must they have pondered on his ways, when amid the urgency of all these demands which looked so high and so indispensable, they saw the unfoldings of the attribute of mercy—and how the supreme Lawgiver was bending upon his guilty creatures an eye of tenderness—and how in his profound and unsearchable wisdom, he was devising for them some plan of restoration—and how the eternal Son had to move from his dwelling-place in heaven, to carry it forward through all the difficulties by which it was encompassed—and how, after, by

the virtue of his mysterious sacrifice, he had magnified the glory of every other perfection, he made mercy rejoice over them all, and threw open a way by which we sinful and polluted wanderers might, with the whole lustre of the Divine character untarnished, be re-admitted into fellowship with God, and be again brought back within the circle of his loyal and affectionate family.

Now, the essential character of such a transaction, viewed as a manifestation of God, does not hang upon the number of worlds, over which this sin and this salvation may have extended. We know that over this one world such an economy of wisdom and of mercy is instituted—and, even should this be the only world that is embraced by it, the moral display of the Godhead is mainly and substantially the same, as if it reached throughout the whole of that habitable extent which the science of astronomy has made known to us. By the disobedience of this one world, the law was trampled on; and, in the business of making truth and mercy to meet, and have a harmonious accomplishment on the men of this world, the dignity of God was put to the same trial; the justice of God appeared to lay the same immoveable barrier; the wisdom of God had to clear a way through the same difficulties; the forgiveness of God had to find the same mysterious conveyance to the sinners of a solitary world, as to the sinners of half a universe. The extent of the field upon which this question was decided, has no more influence on the question itself, than the figure or the dimensions of that field of combat, on which some great political question was fought, has on the importance or on the moral principles of the controversy that gave rise to it. This objection about the narrowness of the theatre, carries along with it all the grossness of materialism. To the eye of spiritual and intelligent beings, it is nothing. In their view, the redemption of a sinful world derives its chief interest from the display it gives of the mind and purposes of the Deity—and, should that world be but a single speck in the immensity of the works of God, the only way in which this affects their estimate of him, is to magnify his loving kindness—who rather than lose one solitary world of the myriads he has formed, would lavish all the riches of his

beneficence and of his wisdom on the recovery of its guilty population.

Now, though it must be admitted that the Bible does not speak clearly or decisively as to the proper effect of redemption being extended to other worlds; it speaks most clearly and most decisively about the knowledge of it being disseminated among other orders of created intelligence than our own. But if the contemplation of God be their supreme enjoyment, then the very circumstance of our redemption being known to them, may invest it, even though it be but the redemption of one solitary world, with an importance as wide as the universe itself. It may spread among the hosts of immensity a new illustration of the character of Him who is all their praise, and looking toward whom every energy within them is moved to the exercise of a deep and delighted admiration. The scene of the transaction may be narrow in point of material extent; while in the transaction itself there may be such a moral dignity, as to blazon the perfections of the Godhead over the face of creation; and from the manifested glory of the Eternal, to send forth a tide of ecstacy, and of high gratulation, throughout the whole extent of his dependent provinces.

I will not, in proof of the position, that the history of our redemption is known in other and distant places of creation, and is matter of deep interest and feeling among other orders of created intelligence—I will not put down all the quotations which might be assembled together upon this argument. It is an impressive circumstance, that when Moses and Elias made a visit to our Saviour on the mount of transfiguration, and appeared in glory from heaven, the topic they brought along with them, and with which they were fraught, was the decease he was going to accomplish at Jerusalem. And however insipid the things of our salvation may be to an earthly understanding; we are made to know, that in the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow, there is matter to attract the notice of celestial spirits, for these are the very things, says the Bible, which angels desire to look into. And however listlessly we, the dull and grovelling children of an exiled family, may feel about the perfections of the Godhead, and the display of those

perfections in the economy of the Gospel, it is intimated to us in the book of God's message, that the creation has its districts and its provinces; and we accordingly read of thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers; and whether these terms denote the separate regions of government, or the beings who, by a commission granted from the sanctuary of heaven, sit in delegated authority over them—even in their eyes the mystery of Christ stands arrayed in all the splendour of unsearchable riches; for we are told that this mystery was revealed for the very intent, that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God. And while we, whose prospect reaches not beyond the narrow limits of the corner we occupy, look on the dealings of God in the world, as carrying in them all the insignificancy of a provincial transaction; God himself, whose eye reaches to places which our eye hath not seen, nor our ear heard of, neither hath it entered into the imagination of our heart to conceive, stamps a universality on the whole matter of the Christian salvation, by such revelations as the following: That he is to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him—and that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth—and that by him God reconciled all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

We will not say in how far some of these passages extend the proper effect of that redemption which is by Christ Jesus, to other quarters of the universe of God; but they at least go to establish a widely disseminated knowledge of this transaction among the other orders of created intelligence. And they give us a distant glimpse of something more extended. They present a faint opening, through which may be seen some few traces of a wider and a nobler dispensation. They bring before us a dim transparency, on the other side of which the images of an obscure magnificence dazzle indistinctly upon the eye; and tell us that in the economy of redemption, there is a grandeur commensurate to all that is known of the other works and purposes of the Eternal. They offer us no details; and man,

who ought not to attempt a wisdom above that which is written, should never put forth his hand to the drapery of that impenetrable curtain which God in his mysterious wisdom has spread over those ways, of which it is but a very small portion that we know of them. But certain it is, that we know as much of them from the Bible; and the Infidel, with all the pride of his boasted astronomy, knows so little of them, from any power of observation, that the baseless argument of his, on which we have dwelt so long, is overborne in the light of all that positive evidence which God has poured around the record of his own testimony, and even in the light of its more obscure and casual intimations.

The minute and variegated details of the way in which this wondrous economy is extended, God has chosen to withhold from us; but he has oftener than once made to us a broad and a general announcement of its dignity. He does not tell us whether the fountain opened in the house of Judah, for sin and for uncleanness, send forth its healing streams to other worlds than our own. He does not tell us the extent of the atonement. But he tells us that the atonement itself, known as it is among the myriads of the celestial, forms the high song of eternity; that the Lamb who was slain, is surrounded by the acclamations of one wide and universal empire; that the might of his wondrous achievements, spreads a tide of gratulation over the multitudes who are about his throne; and that there never ceases to ascend from the worshippers of him who washed us from our sins in his blood, a voice loud as from numbers without number, sweet as from blessed voices uttering joy, when heaven rings jubilee, and loud hosannas fill the eternal regions.

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and honour, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."

A king might have the whole of his reign crowded with the enterprises of glory; and by the might of his arms, and the wisdom of his counsels might win the first reputation among the potentates of the world; and be idolized throughout all his provinces, for the wealth and the security that he had spread around them—and still it is conceivable, that by the act of a single day in behalf of a single family; by some soothing visitation of tenderness to a poor and solitary cottage; by some deed of compassion, which conferred enlargement and relief on one despairing sufferer; by some graceful movement of sensibility at a tale of wretchedness; by some noble effort of self-denial, in virtue of which he subdued his every purpose of revenge, and spread the mantle of a generous oblivion over the fault of the man who has insulted and aggrieved him; above all, by an exercise of pardon so skilfully administered, as that instead of bringing him down to a state of defencelessness against the provocation of future injuries, it threw a deeper sacredness over him, and stamped a more inviolable dignity than ever on his person and character:—why, my brethren, on the strength of one such performance done in a single hour, and reaching no further in its immediate effects than to one house, or to one individual, it is a most possible thing, that the highest monarch upon earth might draw such a lustre around him as would eclipse the renown of all his public achievements—and that such a display of magnanimity, or of worth, beaming from the secrecy of his familiar moments, might waken a more cordial veneration in every bosom, than all the splendour of his conspicuous history—aye, and that it might pass down to posterity, as a more enduring monument of greatness, and raise him further by its moral elevation above the level of ordinary praise; and when he passes in review before the men of distant ages, may this deed of modest, gentle, unobtrusive virtue, be at all times appealed to, as the most sublime and touching memorial of his name.

In like manner did the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, surrounded as he is with the splendours of a wide and everlasting monarchy, turn him to our humble habitation; and the footsteps of God manifest in the flesh, have been on the narrow spot of ground we occupy; and small though our mansion be, amid

the orbs and the systems of immensity, hither hath the King of glory bent his mysterious way, and entered the tabernacle of men, and in the disguise of a servant did he sojourn for years under the roof which canopies our obscure and solitary world. Yes, it is but a twinkling atom in the peopled infinity of worlds that are round it—but look to the moral grandeur of the transaction, and not to the material extent of the field upon which it was executed—and from the retirement of our dwelling-place, there may issue forth such a display of the Godhead, as will circulate the glories of his name among all his worshippers. Here sin entered. Here was the kind and universal beneficence of a Father, repaid by the ingratitude of a whole family. Here the law of God was dishonoured, and that too in the face of its proclaimed and unalterable sanctions. Here the mighty contest of the attributes was ended—and when justice put forth its demands, and truth called for the fulfilment of its warnings, and the immutability of God would not recede by a single iota, from any one of its positions, and all the severities he had ever uttered against the children of iniquity, seemed to gather into one cloud of threatening vengeance on the tenement that held us—did the visit of the only-begotton Son chase away all these obstacles to the triumph of mercy—and humble as the tenement may be, deeply shaded in the obscurity of insignificance as it is, among the statelier mansions which are on every side of it—yet will the recal of its exiled family never be forgotten—and the illustration that has been given here, of the mingled grace and majesty of God, will never lose its place among the themes and the acclamations of eternity.

And here it may be remarked, that as the earthly king who throws a moral aggrandizement around him, by the act of a single day, finds, that after its performance, he may have the space of many years for gathering to himself the triumphs of an extended reign—so the king who sits on high, and with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, will find, that after the period of that special administration is ended, by which this strayed world is again brought back within the limits of his favoured creation, there is room enough along the mighty track of eternity, for accumulating upon himself a glory as wide and as universal as is the extent of his do-

minions. You will allow the most illustrious of this world's potentates, to give some hour of his private history to a deed of cottage or of domestic tenderness; and every time you think of the interesting story, you will feel how sweetly and how gracefully the remembrance of it blends itself with the fame of his public achievements. But still you think that there would not have been room enough for these achievements of his, had much of his time been spent, either among the habitations of the poor, or in the retirement of his own family; and you conceive, that it is because a single day bears so small a proportion to the time of his whole history, that he has been able to combine an interesting display of private worth, with all that brilliancy of exhibition, which has brought him down to posterity in the character of an august and a mighty sovereign.

Now apply this to the matter before us. Had the history of our redemption been confined within the limits of a single day, the argument that infidelity has drawn from the multitude of other worlds, would never have been offered. It is true, that ours is but an insignificant portion of the territory of God—but if the attentions by which he has signalized it, had only taken up a single day, this would never have occurred to us as forming any sensible withdrawment of the mind of the Deity from the concerns of his vast and universal government. It is the time which the plan of our salvation requires, that startles all those on whom this argument has any impression. It is the time taken up about this paltry world, which they feel to be out of proportion to the number of other worlds, and to the immensity of the surrounding creation. Now, to meet this impression, I do not insist at present on what I have already brought forward, that God, whose ways are not as our ways, can have his eye at the same instant on every place, and can divide and diversify his attention into any number of distinct exercises. What I have now to remark, is, that the infidel who urges the astronomical objection to the truth of Christianity, is only looking with half an eye to the principle on which it rests. Carry out the principle, and the objection vanishes. He looks abroad on the immensity of space, and tells us how impossible it is, that this narrow corner of it can be so distinguished by the attentions of the Deity. Why does he not also look abroad on

the magnificence of eternity; and perceive how the whole period of these peculiar attentions, how the whole time which elapses between the fall of man and the consummation of the scheme of his recovery, is but the twinkling of a moment to the mighty roll of innumerable ages? The whole interval between the time of Jesus Christ's leaving his Father's abode, to sojourn among us, to that time when he shall have put all his enemies under his feet, and delivered up the kingdom to God, even his Father, that God may be all in all; the whole of this interval bears as small a proportion to the whole of the Almighty's reign, as this solitary world does to the universe around it, and an infinitely smaller proportion than any time, however short which an earthly monarch spends on some enterprise of private benevolence, does to the whole walk of his public and recorded history.

Why then does not the man, who can shoot his conceptions so sublimely abroad over the field of an immensity that knows no limits—why does he not also shoot them forward through the vista of a succession, that ever flows without stop and without termination? He has burst across the confines of this world's habitation in space, and out of the field which lies on the other side of it, has he gathered an argument against the truth of revelation. I feel that I have nothing to do but to burst across the confines of this world's history in time and out of the futurity which lies beyond it, can I gather that which will blow the argument to pieces, or stamp upon it all the narrowness of a partial and mistaken calculation. The day is coming, when the whole of this wondrous history shall be looked back upon by the eye of the remembrance, and be regarded as one incident in the extended annals of creation, and with all the illustration and all the glory it has thrown on the character of the Deity, will it be seen as a single step in the evolution of his designs; and long as the time may appear, from the first act of our redemption to its final accomplishment, and close and exclusive as we may think the attentions of God upon it, it will be found that it has left him room enough for all his concerns, and that on the high scale of eternity, it is but one of those passing and ephemeral transactions, which crowd the history of a never-ending administration.

DISCOURSE V.

ON THE SYMPATHY THAT IS FELT FOR MAN IN THE DISTANT PLACES OF CREATION.

LUKE XV. 7.

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."

I HAVE already attempted at full length to establish the position, that the infidel argument of astronomers goes to expunge a natural perfection from the character of God, even that wondrous property of his, by which he, at the same instant of time, can bend a close and a careful attention on a countless diversity of objects, and diffuse the intimacy of his power and of his presence, from the greatest to the minutest and most insignificant of them all. I also adverted shortly to this other circumstance, that it went to impair a moral attribute of the Deity. It goes to impair the benevolence of his nature. It is saying much for the benevolence of God, to say, that a single world, or a single system, is not enough for it—that it must have the spread of a mightier region, on which it may pour forth a tide of exuberancy throughout all its provinces—that as far as our vision can carry us, it has strewed immensity with the floating receptacles of life, and has stretched over each of them the garniture of such a sky as mantles our own habitation—and that even from distances which are far beyond the reach of human eye, the songs of gratitude and praise may now be arising to the one God, who sits surrounded by the regards of his one great and universal family.

Now it is saying much for the benevolence of God, to say

that it sends forth these wide and distant emanations over the surface of a territory so ample, that the world we inhabit, lying imbedded as it does amidst so much surrounding greatness, shrinks into a point that to the universal eye might appear to be almost imperceptible. But does it not add to the power and to the perfection of this universal eye, that at the very moment it is taking a comprehensive survey of the vast, it can fasten a steady and undistracted attention on each minute and separate portion of it; that at the very moment it is looking at all worlds it can look most pointedly and most intelligently to each of them: that at the very moment it sweeps the field of immensity, it can settle all the earnestness of its regards upon every distinct hand-breadth of that field; that at the very moment at which it embraces the totality of existence, it can send a most thorough and penetrating inspection into each of its details, and into every one of its endless diversities? You cannot fail to perceive how much this adds to the power of the all seeing eye. Tell me then, if it do not add as much perfection to the benevolence of God, that while it is expatiating over the vast field of created things, there is not one portion of the field overlooked by it; that while it scatters blessings over the whole of an infinite range, it causes them to descend in a shower of plenty on every separate habitation: that while his arm is underneath and round about all worlds, he enters within the precincts of every one of them, and gives a care and a tenderness to each individual of their teeming population. Oh! does not the God, who is said to be love, shed over this attribute of his its finest illustration, when, while he sits in the highest heaven, and pours out his fulness on the whole subordinate domain of nature and of providence, he bows a pitying regard on the very humblest of his children, and sends his reviving Spirit into every heart, and cheers by his presence every home, and provides for the wants of every family, and watches every sick-bed, and listens to the complaints of every sufferer; and while by his wondrous mind the weight of universal government is borne, oh! is it not more wondrous and more excellent still, that he feels for every sorrow, and has an ear open to every prayer?

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be," says the apostle

John, "but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." It is the present lot of the angels, that they behold the face of our Father in heaven, and it would seem as if the effect of this was to form and to perpetuate in them the moral likeness of himself, and that they reflect back upon him his own image, and that thus a diffused resemblance to the Godhead is kept up among all those adoring worshippers who live in the near and rejoicing contemplation of the Godhead. Mark then how that peculiar and endearing feature in the goodness of the Deity, which we have just now adverted to—mark how beauteously it is reflected downwards upon us in the revealed attitude of angels. From the high eminences of heaven, are they bending a wakeful regard over the men of this sinful world; and the repentance of every one of them spreads a joy and a high gratulation throughout all its dwelling places. Put this trait of the angelic character into contrast with the dark and louring spirit of an infidel. He is told of the multitude of other worlds, and he feels a kindling magnificence in the conception, and he is seduced by an elevation which he cannot carry, and from this airy summit does he look down on the insignificance of the world we occupy, and pronounces it to be unworthy of those visits and of those attentions which we read of in the New Testament. He is unable to wing his upward way along the scale, either of moral or of natural perfection; and when the wonderful extent of the field is made known to him, over which the wealth of the Divinity is lavished—there he stops, and wilders, and altogether misses this essential perception, that the power and perfection of the Divinity are not more displayed by the mere magnitude of the field, than they are by that minute and exquisite filling up, which leaves not its smallest portions neglected; but which imprints the fulness of the Godhead upon every one of them; and proves, by every flower of the pathless desert, as well as by every orb of immensity, how this unsearchable Being can care for all, and provide for all, and throned in mystery too high for us, can, throughout every instant of time, keep his attentive eye on every separate thing that he has formed, and by an act of his thoughtful and presiding intelligence, can constantly embrace all.

But God, compassed about as he is with light inaccessible, and full of glory, lies so hidden from the ken and conception of all our faculties, that the spirit of man sinks exhausted by its attempts to comprehend him. Could the image of the Supreme be placed direct before the eye of the mind, that flood of splendour, which is ever issuing from him on all who have the privilege of beholding, would not only dazzle, but overpower us. And, therefore it is, that I bid you look to the reflection of that image, and thus to take a view of its mitigated glories, and to gather the lineaments of the Godhead in the face of those righteous angels, who have never thrown away from them the resemblance in which they were created; and, unable as you are to support the grace and the majesty of that countenance, before which the sons and the prophets of other days fell, and became as dead men, let us, before we bring this argument to a close, borrow one lesson of Him who sitteth on the throne, from the aspect and the revealed doings of those who are surrounding it.

The infidel, then, as he widens the field of his contemplations would suffer its every separate object to die away into forgetfulness: these angels, expatiating as they do over the range of a loftier universality, are represented as all awake to the history of each of its distinct and subordinate provinces. The infidel, with his mind afloat among suns and among systems, can find no place in his already occupied regards, for that humble planet which lodges and accommodates our species; the angels, standing on a loftier summit, and with a mightier prospect of creation before them, are yet represented as looking down on this single world, and attentively marking the every feeling and the every demand of all its families. The infidel, by sinking us down to an unnoticeable minuteness, would lose sight of our dwelling-place altogether, and spread a darkening shroud of oblivion over all the concerns and all the interests of men; but the angels will not so abandon us; and undazzled by the whole surpassing grandeur of that scenery which is around them, are they revealed as directing all the fulness of their regard to this our habitation, and casting a longing and benignant eye on ourselves and on our children. The infidel will tell us of those worlds which

roll afar, and the number of which outstrips the arithmetic of the human understanding—and then with the hardness of an unfeeling calculation, will he consign the one we occupy, with all its guilty generations, to despair.

But he who counts the number of the stars, is set forth to us as looking at every inhabitant among the millions of our species, and by the word of the Gospel beckoning to him with the hand of invitation, and on the very first step of his return, as moving towards him with all the eagerness of the prodigal's father, to receive him back again into that presence from which he had wandered. And as to this world, in favour of which the scowling infidel will not permit one solitary movement, all heaven is represented as in a stir about its restoration; and there cannot a single son or a single daughter be recalled from sin unto righteousness, without an acclamation of joy among the hosts of paradise. Aye, and I can say it of the humblest and the unworthiest of you all, that the eye of angels is upon him, and that his repentance would at this moment, send forth a wave of delighted sensibility throughout the mighty throng of their innumerable legions.

Now, the single question I have to ask, is, On which of the two sides of this contrast do we see most of the impress of heaven? Which of the two would be most glorifying to God? Which of them carries upon it most of that evidence which lies in its having a celestial character? For if it be the side of the infidel, then must all our hopes expire with the ratifying of that fatal sentence, by which the world is doomed, through its insignificancy, to perpetual exclusion from the attentions of the Godhead. I have long been knocking at the door of your understanding, and have tried to find an admittance to it for many an argument. I now make my appeal to the sensibilities of your heart; and tell me, to whom does the moral feeling within it yield its readiest testimony—to the infidel, who would make this world of ours vanish away into abandonment—or to those angels, who ring throughout all their mansions the hosannas of joy, over every one individual of its repentant population?

And here I cannot omit to take advantage of that opening with which our Saviour has furnished us, by the parables of

this chapter, and admits us into a familiar view of that principle on which the inhabitants of heaven are so awake to the deliverance and the restoration of our species. To illustrate the difference in the reach of knowledge and of affection, between a man and an angel, let us think of the difference of reach between one man and another. You may often witness a man, who feels neither tenderness nor care beyond the precincts of his own family; but who, on the strength of those instinctive fondnesses which nature has implanted in his bosom, may earn the character of an amiable father, or a kind husband, or a bright example of all that is soft and endearing in the relations of domestic society. Now, conceive him, in addition to all this, to carry his affections abroad, without, at the same time, any abatement of their intensity towards the objects which are at home—that, stepping across the limits of the house he occupies, he takes an interest in the families which are near him—that he lends his services to the town or the district wherein he is placed, and gives up a portion of his time to the thoughtful labours of a humane and public-spirited citizen. By this enlargement in the sphere of his attention he has extended his reach; and, provided he has not done so at the expense of that regard which is due to his family—a thing which, cramped and confined as we are, we are very apt, in the exercise of our humble faculties, to do—I put it to you, whether, by extending the reach of his views and his affections, he has not extended his worth and his moral respectability along with it?

But I can conceive a still further enlargement. I can figure to myself a man, whose wakeful sympathy overflows the field of his own immediate neighbourhood—to whom the name of country comes with all the omnipotence of a charm upon his heart, and with all the urgency of a most righteous and resistless claim upon his services—who never hears the name of Britain sounded in his ears, but it stirs up all his enthusiasm in behalf of the worth and the welfare of its people—who gives himself up, with all the devotedness of a passion, to the best and the purest objects of patriotism—and who, spurning away from him the vulgarities of party ambition, separates his life and his labours to the fine pursuit of augmenting the science, or the

virtue, or the substantial prosperity of his nation. Oh! could such a man retain all the tenderness, and fulfil all the duties which home and which neighbourhood require of him, and at the same time expatiate, in the might of his untired faculties, on so wide a field of benevolent contemplation—would not this extension of reach place him still higher than before, on the scale both of moral and intellectual gradation, and give him a still brighter and more enduring name in the records of human excellence?

And lastly, I can conceive a still loftier flight of humanity—a man, the aspiring of whose heart for the good of man, knows no limitations—whose longings, and whose conceptions on this subject, overleap all the barriers of geography—who, looking on himself as a brother of the species, links every spare energy which belongs to him with the cause of its melioration—who can embrace within the grasp of his ample desires the whole family of mankind—and who, in obedience to a heaven-born movement of principle within him, separates himself to some big and busy enterprise, which is to tell on the moral destinies of the world. Oh! could such a man mix up the softenings of private virtue with the habit of so sublime a comprehension—if, amid those magnificent darings of thought and of performance, the mildness of his benignant eye could still continue to cheer the retreat of his family, and to spend the charm and the sacredness of piety among all its members—could he even mingle himself, in all the gentleness of a soothed and a smiling heart, with the playfulness of his children—and also find strength to shed the blessings of his presence and his counsel over the vicinity around him;—oh! would not the combination of so much grace with so much loftiness, only serve the more to aggrandize him? Would not the one ingredient of a character so rare, go to illustrate and to magnify the other? And would not you pronounce him to be the fairest specimen of our nature, who could so call out all your tenderness, while he challenged and compelled all your veneration?

Nor can I proceed, at this point of my argument, without adverting to the way in which this last and this largest style of benevolence is exemplified in our own country—where the spi-

rit of the Gospel has given to many of its enlightened disciples the impulse of such a philanthropy, as carries abroad their wishes and their endeavours to the very outskirts of human population—a philanthropy, of which, if you asked the extent or the boundary of its field, we should answer, in the language of inspiration, that the field is the world—a philanthropy, which overlooks all the distinctions of cast and of colour, and spreads its ample regards over the whole brotherhood of the species—a philanthropy, which attaches itself to man in the general; to man throughout all his varieties: to man as the partaker of one common nature, and who, in whatever clime or latitude you may meet with him, is found to breathe the same sympathies, and to possess the same high capabilities both of bliss and improvement.

It is true that upon this subject, there is often a loose and unsettled magnificence of thought, which is fruitful of nothing but empty speculation. But the men to whom I allude have not imaged the enterprise in the form of a thing unknown. They have given it a local habitation. They have bodied it forth in deed and in accomplishment. They have turned the dream into a reality. In them, the power of a lofty generalization meets with its happiest attemperament in the principle and perseverance, and all the chastening and subduing virtues of the New Testament. And, were I in search of that fine union of grace and of greatness, which I have now been insisting on, and in virtue of which the enlightened Christian can at once find room in his bosom for the concerns of universal humanity and for the play of kindliness towards every individual he meets with—I could no where more readily expect to find it, than with the worthies of our own land—the Howard of a former generation, who paced it over Europe in quest of the unseen wretchedness, which abounds in it; or in such men of our present generation as Wilberforce, who lifted his unwearied voice against the biggest outrage ever practised on our nature, till he wrought its extermination; and Clarkson, who plied his assiduous task at rearing the materials of its impressive history, and at length carried, for this righteous cause, the mind of Paliament; and Carey, from whose hand the generations of the East

are now receiving the elements of their moral renovation, and, in fine, those holy and devoted men, who count not their lives dear unto them; but, going forth every year from the island of our habitation, carry the message of heaven over the face of the world; and in the front of severest obloquy are now labouring in remotest lands; and are reclaiming another and another portion from the wastes of dark and fallen humanity; and are widening the domains of gospel light and gospel principle among them; and are spreading a moral beauty around the every spot on which they pitch their lowly tabernacle; and are at length compelling even the eye and the testimony of gainsayers, by the success of their noble enterprise; and are forcing the exclamation of delighted surprise from the charmed and the arrested traveller, as he looks at the softening tints which they are now spreading over the wilderness, and as he hears the sound of the chapel bell, and as in those haunts where, at the distance of half a generation, savages would have scowled upon his path he regales himself with the hum of missionary schools, and the lovely spectacle of peaceful and christian villages.

Such, then, is the benevolence, at once so gentle and so lofty, of those men, who, sanctified by the faith that is in Jesus, have had their hearts visited from heaven by a beam of warmth and of sacredness.—What then, I should like to know, is the benevolence of the place from whence such an influence cometh? How wide is the compass of this virtue there, and how exquisite is the feeling of its tenderness, and how pure and how fervent are its aspirings among those unfallen beings who have no darkness and no encumbering weight of corruption to strive against? Angels have a mightier reach of contemplation. Angels can look upon this world, and all which it inherits, as the part of a larger family. Angels were in the full exercise of their powers even at the first infancy of our species, and shared in the gratulations of that period, when at the birth of humanity all intelligent nature felt a gladdening impulse, and the morning stars sang together for joy. They loved us even with the love which a family on earth bears to a younger sister; and the very childhood of our tinier faculties did only serve the more to endear us to them; and though born at a later hour in the

history of creation, did they regard us as heirs of the same destiny with themselves, to rise along with them in the scale of moral elevation, to bow at the same footstool and to partake in those high dispensations of a parent's kindness and a parent's care, which are ever emanating from the throne of the Eternal on all the members of a duteous and affectionate family. Take the reach of an angel's mind, but, at the same time take the seraphic fervour of an angel's benevolence along with it; how from the eminence on which he stands he may have an eye upon many worlds. and a remembrance upon the origin and the successive concerns of every one of them; how he may feel the full force of a most affecting relationship with the inhabitants of each, as the offspring of one common Father; and though it be both the effect and the evidence of our depravity, that we cannot sympathise with these pure and generous ardours of a celestial spirit; how it may consist with the lofty comprehension, and the ever breathing love of an angel, that he can both shoot his benevolence abroad over a mighty expanse of planets and of systems, and lavish a flood of tenderness on each individual of their teeming population.

Keep all this in view, and you cannot fail to perceive how the principle, so finely and so copiously illustrated in this chapter may be brought to meet the infidelity we have thus long been employed in combating. It was nature, and the experience of every bosom will affirm it—it was nature in the shepherd to leave the ninety and nine of his flock forgotten and alone in the wilderness, and betaking himself to the mountains, to give all his labour and all his concern to the pursuit of one solitary wanderer. It was nature; and we are told in the passage before us, that it is such a portion of nature as belongs not merely to men but to angels; when the woman, with her mind in a state of listlessness as to the nine pieces of silver that were in secure custody, turned the whole force of her anxiety to the one piece which she had lost, and for which she had to light a candle, and to sweep the house, and to search diligently until she found it. It was nature in her to rejoice more over that piece, than over all the rest of them, and to tell it abroad among friends and neighbours, that they might rejoice along with her

—aye, and sadly effaced as humanity is, in all her original lineaments, this is a part of our nature, the very movements of which are experienced in heaven, "where there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." For any thing I know, the very planet that rolls in the immensity around me may be a land of righteousness; and be a member of the household of God; and have her secure dwelling-place within that ample limit, which embraces his great and universal family. But I know at least of one wanderer; and how wofully she has strayed from peace and from purity; and how in dreary alienation from him who made her, she has bewildered herself among those many devious tracts, which have carried her afar from the path of immortality; and how sadly tarnished all those beauties and felicities are, which promised, on that morning of her existence when God looked on her, and saw that all was very good—which promised so richly to bless and to adorn her; and how in the eye of the whole unfallen creation, she has renounced all this goodliness, and is fast departing away from them into guilt, and wretchedness, and shame. Oh! if there be any truth in this chapter, and any sweet or touching nature in the principle which runs throughout all its parables, let us cease to wonder, though they who surround the throne of love should be looking so intently towards us—or though in the way by which they have singled us out, all the other orbs of space should, for one short season, on the scale of eternity, appear to be forgotten—or though for every step of her recovery, and for every individual who is rendered back again to the fold from which he was separated, another and another message of triumph should be made to circulate among the hosts of paradise—or though lost as we are, and sunk in depravity as we are, all the sympathies of heaven should now be awake on the enterprise of him who has travailed, in the greatness of his strength, to seek and to save us.

And here I cannot but remark how fine a harmony there is between the law of sympathetic nature in heaven, and the most touching exhibitions of it on the face of our world. When one of a numerous household droops under the power of disease, is not that the one to whom all the tenderness is turned, and who,

in a manner, monopolizes the inquiries of his neighbourhood, and the care of his family? When the sighing of the midnight storm sends a dismal foreboding into the mother's heart, to whom of all her offspring, I would ask, are her thoughts and her anxieties then wandering? Is it not to her sailor boy whom her fancy has placed amid the rude and angry surges of the ocean? Does not this, the hour of his apprehended danger, concentrate upon him the whole force of her wakeful meditations? And does not he engross, for a season, her every sensibility, and her every prayer? We sometimes hear of shipwrecked passengers thrown upon a barbarous shore; and seized upon by its prowling inhabitants; and hurried away through the tracks of a dreary and unknown wilderness; and sold into captivity; and loaded with the fetters of irrecoverable bondage; and who, stripped of every other liberty but the liberty of thought, feel even this to be another ingredient of wretchedness, for what can they think of but home, and as all its kind and tender imagery comes upon their remembrance, how can they think of it but in the bitterness of despair? Oh tell me, when the fame of all this disaster reaches his family, who is the member of it to whom is directed the full tide of its griefs and of its sympathies? Who is it that, for weeks and for months, usurps their every feeling, and calls out their largest sacrifices, and sets them to the busiest expedients for getting him back again? Who is it that makes them forgetful of themselves and of all around them; and tell me if you can assign a limit to the pains, and the exertions, and the surrenders which afflicted parents and weeping sisters would make to seek and to save him.

Now conceive, as we are warranted to do by the parables of this chapter, the principle of all these earthly exhibitions to be in full operation around the throne of God. Conceive the universe to be one secure and rejoicing family, and that this alienated world is the only strayed, or only captive member belonging to it; and we shall cease to wonder, that from the first period of the captivity or of our species, down to the consummation of their history in time, there should be such a movement in heaven; or that angels should so often have sped their commissioned way on the errand of our recovery; or that the Son of God

should have bowed himself down to the burden of our mysterious atonement; or that the Spirit of God should now, by the busy variety of his all-powerful influences, be carrying forward that dispensation of grace which is to make us meet for re-admittance into the mansions of the celestial. Only think of love as the reigning principle there; of love, as sending forth its energies and aspirations to the quarter where its object is most in danger of being forever lost to it; of love, as called forth by this single circumstance to its uttermost exertion, and the most exquisite feeling of its tenderness; and then shall we come to a distinct and familiar explanation of this whole mystery: Nor shall we resist by our incredulity the gospel message any longer, though it tells us that throughout the whole of this world's history, long in our eyes, but only a little month in the high periods of immortality, so much of the vigilance, and so much of the earnestness of heaven, should have been expended on the recovery of its guilty population.

There is another touching trait of nature, which goes finely to heighten this principle, and still more forcibly to demonstrate its application to our present argument. So long as the dying child of David was alive, he was kept on the stretch of anxiety and of suffering with regard to it. When it expired, he arose and comforted himself. This narrative of King David is in harmony with all that we experience of our own movements and our own sensibilities. It is the power of uncertainty which gives them so active and so interesting a play in our bosoms; and which heightens all our regards to a tenfold pitch of feeling and exercise; and which fixes down our watchfulness upon our infant's dying bed; and which keeps us so painfully alive to every turn and to every symptom in the progress of its malady; and which draws out all our affections for it to a degree of intensity that is quite unutterable; and which urges us on to ply our every effort and our every expedient, till hope withdraw its lingering beam, or till death shut the eyes of our beloved in the slumber of its long and its last repose.

I know not who of you have your names written in the book of life—nor can I tell if this be known to the angels which are in heaven. While in the land of living men, you are under the

power and application of a remedy, which if taken as the gospel prescribes, will renovate the soul, and altogether prepare it for the bloom and the vigour of immortality. Wonder not then that with this principle of uncertainty in such full operation, ministers should feel for you; or angels should feel for you; or all the sensibilities of heaven should be awake upon the symptoms of your grace and reformation; or the eyes of those who stand upon the high eminences of the celestial world, should be so earnestly fixed on the every footstep and new evolution of your moral history. Such a consideration as this should do something more than silence the infidel objection. It should give a practical effect to the calls of repentance. How will it go to aggravate the whole guilt of our impenitency, should we stand out against the power and the tenderness of these manifold applications—the voice of a beseeching God upon us—the word of salvation at our very door—the free offer of strength and of acceptance sounded in our hearing—the spirit in readiness with his agency to meet our every desire and our every inquiry—angels beckoning us to their company—and the very first movements of our awakened conscience drawing upon us all their regard, and all their earnestness!

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE CONTEST FOR AN ASCENDENCY OVER MAN, AMONG THE HIGHER ORDERS OF INTELLIGENCE.

COLOSSIANS ii. 15.

"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

THOUGH these astronomical Discourses be now drawing to a close, it is not because I feel that much more might not be said on the subject of them, both in the way of argument and of illustration. The whole of the infidel difficulty proceeds upon the assumption, that the exclusive bearing of Chistianity is upon the people of our earth; that this solitary planet is in no way implicated with the concerns of a wider dispensation; that the revelation we have of the dealings of God, in this district of his empire, does not suit and subordinate itself to a system of moral administration, as extended as in the whole of his monarchy. Or, in other words, because infidels have not access to the whole truth, will they refuse a part of it however well attested or well accredited it may be; because a mantle of deep obscurity rests on the government of God, when taken in all its eternity and all its entireness, will they shut their eyes against that allowance of light which has been made to pass downwards upon our world from time to time, through so many partial unfoldings; and till they are made to know the share which other planets have in these communications of mercy, will they turn them away from the actual message which has come to their own door, and will neither examine its credentials, nor be alarmed by its warnings, nor be won by the tenderness of its invitations.

On that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, there will be found such a wilful duplicity and darkening of the mind in the whole of this proceeding, as shall bring down upon it the burden of a righteous condemnation. But, even now, does it lie open to the rebuke of philosophy, when the soundness and the consistency of her principles are brought faithfully to bear upon it. Were the character of modern science rightly understood, it would be seen, that the very thing which gave such strength and sureness to all her conclusions, was that humility of spirit which belonged to her. She promulgates all that is positively known; but she maintains the strictest silence and modesty about all that is unknown. She thankfully accepts of evidence wherever it can be found; nor does she spurn away from her the very humblest contribution of such doctrine as can be witnessed by human observation, or can be attested by human veracity. But with all this she can hold out most sternly against that power of eloquence and fancy, which often throws so bewitching a charm over the plausibilities of ingenious speculation. Truth is the alone idol of her reverence and did she at all times keep by her attachments, nor throw them away when theology submitted to her cognizance its demonstrations and its claims, we should not despair of witnessing as great a revolution in those prevailing habitudes of thought which obtain throughout our literary establishments, on the subject of Christianity, as that which has actually taken place in the philosophy of external nature. This is the first field on which have been successfully practised the experimental lessons of Bacon; and they who are conversant with these matters, know how great and how general a uniformity of doctrine now prevails in the sciences of astronomy, and mechanics, and chemistry, and almost all the other departments in the history and philosophy of matter. But this uniformity stands strikingly contrasted with the diversity of our moral systems, with the restless fluctuations both of language and of sentiment which are taking place in the philosophy of mind, with the palpable fact that every new course of instruction upon this subject, has some new articles, or some new explanations to peculiarize it: and all this is to be attributed, not to the progress of the science, not to the growing, but

to an alternating movement; not to its perpetual additions, but to its perpetual vibrations.

I mean not to assert the futility of moral science, or to deny her importance, or to insist on the utter hopelessness of her advancement. The Baconian method will not probably push forward her discoveries with such a rapidity, or to such an extent, as many of her sanguine disciples have anticipated. But if the spirit and the maxims of this philosophy were at all times proceeded upon, it would certainly check that rashness and variety of excogitation, in virtue of which it may almost be said, that every new course presents us with a new system, and that every new teacher has some singularity or other to characteize him. She may be able to make out an exact transcript of the phenomena of mind, and in so doing, she yields a most important contribution to the stock of human acquirements. But when she attempts to grope her darkling way through the counsels of the Deity, and the futurities of his administration; when, without one passing acknowledgment to the embassy which professes to have come from Him, or to the facts and to the testimonies by which it has so illustriously been vindicated, she launches forth her own speculations on the character of God, and the destiny of man; when, though this be a subject on which neither the recollections of history, nor the ephemeral experience of any single life, can furnish one observation to enlighten her, she will nevertheless utter her own plausibilities, not merely with a contemptuous neglect of the Bible, but in direct opposition to it; then it is high time to remind her of the difference between the reverie of him who has not seen God, and the well-accredited declaration of Him who was in the beginning with God, and was God; and to tell her that this so far from being the argument of an ignoble fanaticism, is in harmony with the very argument upon which the science of experiment has been reared, and by which it has been at length delivered from the influence of theory, and purified of all its vain and visionary splendours.

In my last Discourses, I have attempted to collect from the records of God's actual communication to the world, such traces of relationship between other orders of being and the great

family of mankind, as serve to prove that Christianity is not so paltry and provincial a system as infidelity presumes it to be. And as I said before, I have not exhausted all that may legitimately be derived upon this subject from the informations of Scripture. I have adverted, it is true, to the knowledge of our moral history, which obtains throughout other provinces of the intelligent creation. I have asserted the universal importance which this may confer on the transactions even of one planet, in as much as it may spread an honourable display of the Godhead among all the mansions of infinity. I have attempted to expatiate on the argument, that an event little in itself, may be so pregnant with character, as to furnish all the worshippers of heaven with a theme of praise for eternity. I have stated that nothing is of magnitude in their eyes, but that which serves to endear to them the Father of their spirits, or to shed a lustre over the glory of his incomprehensible attributes—and that thus, from the redemption even of our solitary species, there may go forth such an exhibition of the Deity, as shall bear the triumphs of his name to the very outskirts of the universe.

I have further adverted to another distinct scriptural intimation, that the state of fallen man was not only matter of knowledge to other orders of creation, but was also matter of deep regret and affectionate sympathy; that, agreeably to such laws of sympathy as are most familiar even to human observation, the very wretchedness of our condition was fitted to concentrate upon us the feelings, and the attentions, and the services, of the celestial—to single us out for a time to the gaze of their most earnest and unceasing contemplation—to draw forth all that was kind and all that was tender within them—and just in proportion to the need and to the helplessness of us miserable exiles from the family of God, to multiply upon us the regards, and call out in our behalf the fond and eager exertions of those who had never wandered away from Him. This appears from the Bible to be the style of that benevolence which glows and which circulates around the throne of heaven. It is the very benevolence which emanates from the throne itself, and the attentions of which have for so many thousand years signalized the inhabitants of our world. This may look a long period for

so paltry a world. But how have infidels come to their conception that our world is so paltry? By looking abroad over the countless systems of immensity. But why then have they missed the conception, that the time of those peculiar visitations, which they look upon as so disproportionate to the magnitude of this earth, is just as evanescent as the earth itself is insignificant? Why look they not abroad on the countless generations of eternity; and thus come back to the conclusion, that after all, the redemption of our species is but an ephemeral doing in the history of intelligent nature; that it leaves the Author of it room for all the accomplishments of a wise and equal administration; and not to mention, that even during the progress of it, it withdraws not a single thought or a single energy of his from other fields of creation, that there remains time enough to him for carrying round the visitations of as striking and as peculiar a tendeness, over the whole extent of his great and universal monarchy?

It might serve still further to incorporate the concerns of our planet with the general history of moral and intelligent beings, to state, not merely the knowledge which they take of us, and not merely the compassionate anxiety which they feel for us; but to state the importance derived to our world from its being the actual theatre of a keen and ambitious contest among the upper orders of creation. You know that how, for the possession of a very small and insulated territory, the mightiest empires of the world would have put forth all their resources; and and on some field of mustering competition have monarchs met, and embarked for victory, all the pride of a country's talent, and all the flower and strength of a country's population. The solitary island, around which so many fleets are hovering, and on the shores of which so many armed men are descending, as to an arena of hostility, may well wonder at its own unlooked for estimation. But other principles are animating the battle, and the glory of nations is at stake; and a much higher result is in the contemplation of each party, than the gain of so humble an acquirement as the primary object of the war; and honour, dearer to many a bosom than existence, is now the interest on which so much blood and so much treasure is expend-

ed; and the stirring spirit of emulation has now got hold of the combatants; and thus, amid all the insignificancy, which attaches to the material origin of the contest, do both the eagerness and the extent of it, receive from the constitution of our nature, their most full and adequate explanation.

Now, if this be also the principle of higher natures, if, on the one hand God be jealous of his honour, and on the other, there be proud and exalted spirits, who scowl defiance at him and at his monarchy;—if, on the side of heaven, there be an angelic host rallying around the standard of loyalty, who flee with alacrity at the bidding of the Almighty, who are devoted to his glory, and feel a rejoicing interest in the evolution of his counsels; and if, on the side of hell, there be a sullen front of resistance, a hate and malice inextinguishable, an unequalled daring of revenge to baffle the wisdom of the Eternal, and to arrest the hand, and to defeat the purposes of Omnipotence;—then let the material prize of victory be insignificant as it may, it is the victory in itself, which upholds the impulse of this keen and stimulated rivalry. If, by the sagacity of one infernal mind, a single planet has been seduced from its allegiance, and been brought under the ascendency of him, who is called in Scripture, "the god of this world," and if the errand on which our Redeemer came, was to destroy the works of the devil —then let this planet have all the littleness, which astronomy has assigned to it—call it what it is, one of the smaller islets which float on the ocean of vacancy; it has become the theatre of such a competition, as may have all the desires and all the energies of a divided universe embarked upon it. It involves in it other objects than the single recovery of our species. It decides higher questions. It stands linked with the supremacy of God, and will at length demonstrate the way in which he inflicts chastisement and overthrow upon all his enemies. I know not if our rebellious world be the only strong-hold which satan is possessed of, or if it be but the single post of an extended warfare, that is now going on between the powers of light and of darkness. But be it the one or the other, the parties are in array, and the spirit of the contest is in full energy, and the honour of mighty combatants is at stake; and let us therefore cease to

wonder that our humble residence has been made the theatre of so busy an operation, or that the ambition of loftier natures has here put forth all its desire and all its strenuousness.

This unfolds to us another of those high and extensive bearings, which the moral history of our globe may have on the system of God's universal administration. Were an enemy to touch the shore of this high-minded country, and to occupy so much as one of the humblest villages, and there to seduce the natives from their loyalty, and to sit down along with them in entrenched defiance to all the threats, and to all the preparations of an insulted empire—oh! how would the cry of wounded pride resound throughout all the ranks and varieties of our mighty population; and this very movement of indignancy would reach the king upon his throne; and circulate among those who stood in all the grandeur of chieftainship around him; and be heard to thrill in the eloquence of Parliament; and spread so resistless an appeal to a nation's honour, or a nation's patriotism, that the trumpet of war would summon to its call all the spirit and all the willing energies of our kingdom; and rather than sit down in patient endurance under the burning disgrace of such a violation, would the whole of its strength and resources be embarked upon the contest; and never, never would we let down our exertions and our sacrifices, till either our deluded countrymen were reclaimed, or till the whole of this offence were by one righteous act of vengeance, swept away altogether from the face of the territory it deformed.

The Bible is always most full and most explanatory on those points of revelation in which men are personally interested. But it does at times offer a dim transparency, through which may be caught a partial view of such designs and of such enterprises as are now afloat among the upper orders of intelligence. It tells us of a mighty struggle that is now going on for a moral ascendency over the hearts of this world's population. It tells us that our race were sednced from their allegiance to God, by the plotting sagacity of one who stands pre-eminent against him, among the hosts of a very wide and extended rebellion. It tells us of the Captain of Salvation, who undertook to spoil him of this triumph, and throughout the whole of that magnifi-

cent train of propheey which points to him, does it describe the work he had to do as a conflict, in which strength was to be put forth, and painful suffering to be endured, and fury to be poured upon enemies, and principalities to be dethroned, and all those toils, and dangers, and difficulties to be borne, which strewed the path of perseverance that was to carry him to victory.

But it is a contest of skill, as well as of strength and of influence. There is the earnest competition of angelic faculties embarked on this stuggle for ascendency. And while in the Bible there is recorded, (faintly and partially, we admit,) the deep and insidious policy that is practised on the one side; we are also told, that on the plan of our world's restoration, there are lavised all the riches of an unsearchable wisdom upon the other. It would appear, that for the accomplishment of his purpose, the great enemy of God and of man plied his every calculation; and brought all the devices of his deep and settled malignity to bear upon our species; and thought that could he involve us in sin, every attribute of the Divinity stood staked to the banishment of our race from beyond the limits of the empire of righteousness; and thus did he practise his invasions on the moral territory of the unfallen; and glorying in his success, did he fancy and feel that he had achieved a permament separation between the God who sitteth in heaven, and one at least of the planetary mansions which he had reared.

The errand of the Saviour was to restore this sinful world, and have its people re-admitted within the circle of heaven's pure and righteous family. But in the government of heaven, as well as in the government of earth, there are certain principles which cannot be compromised; and certain maxims of administration which must never be departed from; and a certain character of majesty and of truth, on which the taint even of the slightest violation can never be permitted; and a certain authority which must be upheld by the immutability of all its sanctions, and the unerring fulfilment of all its wise and righteous proclamations. All this was in the mind of the archangel, and a gleam of malignant joy shot athwart him as he conceived his project for hemming our unfortunate species within

the bound of an irrecoverable dilemma; and as surely as sin and holiness could not enter into fellowship, so surely did he think, that if man were seduced to disobedience, would the truth, and the justice, and the immutability of God, lay their insurmountable barriers on the path of his future acceptance.

It was only in that plan of recovery of which Jesus Christ was the author and the finisher, that the great adversary of our species met with a wisdom which over-matched him. It is true, that he had reared, in the guilt to which he seduced us, a mighty obstacle in the way of this lofty undertaking. But when the grand expedient was announced, and the blood of that atonement, by which sinners are brought nigh, was willingly offered to be shed for us, and the eternal Son, to carry this mystery into accomplishment, assumed our nature—then was the prince of that mighty rebellion, in which the fate and the history of our world are so deeply implicated, in visible alarm for the safety of all his acquisitions:—nor can the record of this wondrous history carry forward its narrative, without furnishing some transient glimpses of a sublime and a superior warfare, in which, for the prize of a spiritual dominion over our species, we may dimly perceive the contest of loftiest talent, and all the designs of heaven in behalf of man, met at every point of their evolution, by the counter-workings of a rival strength and a rival sagacity.

We there read of a struggle which the Captain of our salvation had to sustain, when the lustre of the Godhead lay obscured, and the strength of its omnipotence was mysteriously weighed down under the infirmities of our nature—how satan singled him out, and dared him to the combat of the wilderness—how all his wiles and all his influences were resisted—how he left our Saviour in all the triumphs of unsubdued loyalty—how the progress of this mighty acheivment is marked by the every character of a conflict—how many of the Gospel miracles were so many direct infringements on the power and empire of a great spiritual rebellion—how in one precious season of gladness among the few which brightened the dark career of our Saviour's humiliation, he rejoiced in spirit, and gave as the cause of it to his disciples, that "he saw satan fall like light-

ning from heaven"—how the momentary advantages that were gotten over him, are ascribed to the agency of this infernal being, who entered the heart of Judas, and tempted the disciple to betray his Master and his Friend. I know that I am treading on the confines of mystery. I cannot tell what the battle that he fought. I cannot compute the terror or the strength of his enemies. I cannot say, for I have not been told, how it was that they stood in marshalled and hideous array against him :—nor can I measure how great the firm daring of his soul, when he tasted that cup in all its bitterness, which he prayed might pass away from him ; when with the feeling that he was forsaken by his God, he trod the wine-press alone ; when he entered single handed upon that dreary period of agony, and insult, and death, in which from the garden to the cross, he had to bear the burden of a world's atonement. I cannot speak in my own language, but I can say in the language of the Bible, of the days and the nights of this great enterprise, that it was the season of the travail of his soul ; that it was the hour and the power of darkness ; that the work of redemption was a work accompanied by the effort, and the violence, and the fury of a combat ; by all the arduousness of a battle in its progress, and all the glories of a victory in its termination ; and after he called out that it was finished, after he was loosed from the prison-house of the grave, after he had ascended up on high, he is said to have made captivity captive : and to have spoiled principalities and powers ; and to have seen his pleasure upon his enemies ; and to have made a show of them openly.

I will not affect a wisdom above that which is written, by fancying such details of this warfare as the Bible has not laid before me. But surely it is no more than being wise up to that which is written to assert that in achieving the redemption of our world, a warfare had to be accomplished ; that upon this subject there was among the higher provinces of creation, the keen and the animated conflict of opposing interests ; that the result of it involved something grander and more affecting, than even the fate of this world's population ; that it decided a question of rivalship between the righteous and everlasting Monarch of universal being, and the prince of a great and widely ex-

tended rebellion, of which I neither know how vast is the magnitude, nor how important and diversified are the bearings; and thus do we gather from this consideration, another distinct argument, helping us to explain, why on the salvation of our solitary species so much attention appears to have been concentred, and so much energy appears to have been expended.

But it would appear from the records of inspiration, that the contest is not yet ended; that on the one hand the Spirit of God is employed in making for the truths of Christianity, a way into the human heart, with all the power of an effectual demonstration; that on the other there is a spirit now abroad, which worketh in the children of disobedience; that on the one hand, the Holy Ghost is calling men out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel; and that on the other hand, he who is styled the god of this world, is blinding their hearts, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should enter into them; that they who are under the dominion of the one, are said to have overcome, because greater is he that is in them than he that is in the world; and that they who are under the dominion of the other, are said to be the children of the devil, and to be under his snare, and to be taken captive by him at his will. How these respective powers do operate, is one question. The fact of their operation, is another. We abstain from the former. We attach ourselves to the latter, and gather from it, that the prince of darkness still walketh abroad among us; that he is still working his insidious policy, if not with the vigorous inspiration of hope, at least with the frantic energies of despair; that while the overtures of reconciliation are made to circulate through the world, he is plying all his devices to deafen and to extinguish the impression of them; or, in other words, while a process of invitation and of argument has emanated from heaven, for reclaiming men to their loyalty—the process is resisted at all its points, by one who is putting forth his every expedient, and wielding a mysterious ascendency, to seduce and to enthral them.

To an infidel ear, all this carries the sound of something wild and visionary along with it. But though only known through the medium of revelation; after it is known, who can

fail to recognize its harmony with the great lineaments of human experience? Who has not felt the workings of a rivalry within him, between the power of conscience and the power of temptation? Who does not remember those seasons of retirement, when the calculations of eternity had gotten a momentary command over the heart; and time, with all its interests and all its vexations, had dwindled into insignificancy before them? And who does not remember, how upon his actual engagement with the objects of time, they resumed a control, as great and as omnipotent, as if all the importance of eternity adhered to them—how they emitted from them such an impression upon his feelings, as to fix and to fascinate the whole man into a subserviency to their influence—how in spite of every lesson of their worthlessness, brought home to him at every turn by the rapidity of the seasons, and the vicissitudes of life, and the ever-moving progress of his own earthly career, and the visible ravages of death among his acquaintances around him, and the desolations of his family, and the constant breaking up of his system of friendships, and the affecting spectacle of all that lives and is in motion, withering and hastening to the grave;—oh! how comes it, that in the face of all this experience, the whole elevation of purpose, conceived in the hour of his better understanding, should be dissipated and forgotten? Whence the might, and whence the mystery of that spell, which so binds and so infatuates us to the world? What prompts us so to embark the whole strength of our eagerness and of our desires in pursuit of interests which we know a few little years will bring to utter annihilation? Who is it that imparts to them all the charm and all the colour of an unfailing durability? Who is it that throws such an air of stability over these earthly tabernacles, as makes them look to the fascinated eye of man like resting-places for eternity? Who is it that so pictures out the objects of sense, and so magnifies the range of their future enjoyment, and so dazzles the fond and deceived imagination, that in looking onward through our earthly career, it appears like the vista, or the perspective of innumerable ages? He who is called the god of this world. He who can dress the idleness of its waking dreams in the garb of reality. He who can pour

a seducing brilliancy over the panorama of its fleeting pleasures and its vain anticipations. He who can turn it into an instrument of deceitfulness; and make it wield such an absolute ascendency over all the affections, that man, become the poor slave of its idolatries, and its charms, puts the authority of conscience, and the warnings of the Word of God, and the offered instigations of the Spirit of God, and all the lessons of calculation, and the wisdom even of his own sound and sober experience, away from him.

But this wondrous contest will come to a close. Some will return to their loyalty, and others will keep by their rebellion; and, in the day of the winding up of the drama of this world's history, there will be made manifest to the myriads of the various orders of creation, both the mercy and vindicated majesty of the Eternal. Oh! on that day how vain will this presumption of the Infidel astronomer appear, when the affairs of men come to be examined in the presence of an innumerable company; and beings of loftiest nature are seen to crowd around the judgment-seat; and the Saviour shall appear in our sky, with a celestial retinue, who have come with him from afar to witness all his doings, and to take a deep an solemn interest in all his dispensations; and the destiny of our species, whom the Infidel would thus detach, in solitary insignificance, from the universe altogether, shall be found to merge and to mingle with higher destinies—the good to spend their eternity with angels—the bad to spend their eternity with angels—the former to be re-admitted into the universal family of God's obedient worshippers—the latter to share in the everlasting pain and ignominy of the defeated hosts of the rebellious—the people of this planet to be implicated, throughout the whole train of their never-ending history, with the higher ranks, and the more extended tribes of intelligence; and thus it is that the special administration we now live under, shall be seen to harmonize in its bearings, and to accord in its magnificence, with all that extent of nature and of her territories, which modern science has unfolded.

DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE SLENDER INFLUENCE OF MERE TASTE AND SENSIBILITY IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

EZEKIEL XXXiii. 32.

"And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not."

You easily understand how a taste for music is one thing, and a real submission to the influence of religion is another;—how the ear may be regaled by the melody of sound, and the heart may utterly refuse the proper impression of the sense that is conveyed by it; how the sons and daughters of the world may, with their every affection devoted to its perishable vanities, inhale all the delights of enthusiasm, as they sit in crowded assemblage around the deep and solemn oratorio;—aye, and whether it be the humility of penitential feeling, or the rapture of grateful acknowledgment, or the sublime of a contemplative piety, or the aspiration of pure and of holy purposes, which breathes throughout the words of the performance, and gives to it all the spirit and all the expression by which it is pervaded; it is a very possible thing, that the moral, and the rational, and the active man, may have given no entrance into his bosom for any of these sentiments; and yet so overpowered may he be by the charm of the vocal conveyance through which they are addressed to him, that he may be made to feel with such an emotion, and to weep with such a tenderness, and to kindle with such a transport, and to glow with such an elevation, as may one and all carry upon them the semblance of sacredness.

But might not this semblance deceive him? Have you never heard any tell, and with complacency too, how powerfully his devotion was awakened by an act of attendance on the oratorio —how his heart, melted and subdued by the influence of harmony, did homage to all the religion of which it was the vehicle —how he was so moved and overborne, that he had to shed the tears of contrition, and to be agitated by the terrors of judgment, and to receive an awe upon his spirit of the greatness and the majesty of God—and that wrought up to the lofty pitch of eternity, he could look down upon the world, and by the glance of one commanding survey, pronounce upon the littleness and the vanity of all its concerns? Oh! it is very, very possible that all this might thrill upon the ears of the man, and circulate a succession of solemn and affecting images around his fancy—and yet that essential principle of his nature, upon which the practical influence of Christianity turns, might have met with no reaching and no subduing efficacy whatever to arouse it. He leaves the exhibition, as dead in trespasses and sins as he came to it. Conscience has not awakened upon him. Repentance has not turned him. Faith has not made any positive lodgement within him of her great and her constraining realities. He speeds him back to his business and to his family, and there he plays off the old man in all the entireness of his uncrucified temper, and of his obstinate worldliness, and of all those earthly and unsanctified affections, which are found to cleave to him with as great tenacity as ever. He is really and experimentally the very same man as before—and all those sensibilities which seemed to bear upon them so much of the air and unction of heaven, are found to go into dissipation, and be forgotten with the loveliness of the song.

Amid all that illusion which such momentary visitations of seriousness and of sentiment thrown around the character of man, let us never lose sight of the test, that "by their fruits ye shall know them." It is not coming up to this test, that you hear and are delighted. It is that you hear and do. This is the ground upon which the reality of your religion is discriminated now; and on the day of reckoning, this is the ground upon which your religion will be judged then; and that award

is to be passed upon you, which will fix and perpetuate your destiny for ever. You have a taste for music. This no more implies the hold and the ascendency of religion over you, than that you have a taste for beautiful scenery, or a taste for painting, or even a taste for the sensualities of epicurism. But music may be made to express the glow and the movement of devotional feeling; and is it saying nothing to say that the heart of him who listens with a raptured ear, is through the whole time of the performance, in harmony with such a movement? Why, it is saying nothing to the purpose. Music may lift the inspiring note of patriotism; and the inspiration may be felt; and it may thrill over the recesses of the soul, to the mustering up of all its energies; and it may sustain to the last cadence of the song, the firm nerve and purpose of intrepidity; and all this may be realized upon him, who in the day of battle, and upon actual collision with the dangers of it, turns out to be a coward. And music may lull the feelings into unison with piety; and stir up the inner man to lofty determinations; and so engage for a time his affections, that as if weaned from the dust, they promise an immediate entrance on some great and elevated career, which may carry him through his pilgrimage superior to all the sordid and grovelling enticements that abound in it. But he turns him to the world, and all this glow abandons him; and the words which he hath heard, he doeth them not; and in the hour of temptation he turns out to be a deserter from the law of allegiance; and the test I have now specified looks hard upon him, and discriminates him amid all the parading insignificance of his fine but fugitive emotions, to be the subject both of present guilt and of future vengeance.

The faithful application of this test would put to flight a host of other delusions. It may be carried round among all those phenomena of human character, where there is the exhibition of something associated with religion, but which is not religion itself. An exquisite relish for music is no test of the influence of Christianity. Neither are many other of the exquisite sensabilities of our nature. When a kind mother closes the eyes of her expiring babe, she is thrown into a flood of sensibility. and soothing to her heart are the sympathy and the prayers of

an attending minister. When a gathering neighbourhood assemble to the funeral of an acquaintance, one pervading sense of regret and tenderness sits on the face of the company; and the deep silence, broken only by the solemn utterance of the man of God, carries a kind of pleasing religiousness along with it. The sacredness of the hallowed day, and the decencies of its observation, may engage the affections of him who loves to walk in the footsteps of his father; and every recurring Sabbath may bring to his bosom, the charm of its regularity and its quietness. Religion has its accomplishments; and in these, there may be something to soothe, and to fascinate, even in the absence of the appropriate influences of religion. The deep and tender impression of a family bereavement, is not religion. The love of established decencies, is not religion. The charm of all that sentimentalism which is associated with many of its solemn and affecting services, is not religion. They form the distinct folds of its accustomed drapery; but they do not, any, or all of them put together, make up the substance of the thing itself. A mother's tenderness may flow most gracefully over the tomb of her departed little one; and she may talk the while of that heaven whither its spirit has ascended. The man whom death had widowed of his friend, may abandon himself to the movements of that grief, which for a time will claim an ascendency over him; and, among the multitude of his other reveries, may love to hear of the eternity, where sorrow and separation are alike unknown. He who has been trained, from his infant days, to remember the Sabbath, may love the holiness of its aspect; and associate himself with all its observances; and take a delighted share in the mechanism of its forms. But, let not these think, because the tastes and the sensibilities which engross them, may be blended with religion, that they indicate either its strength or its existence within them. I recur to the test. I press its imperious exactions upon you. I call for fruit, and demand the permanency of a religious influence on the habits and the history. Oh! how many who take a flattering unction to their souls, when they think of their amiable feelings, and their becoming observations, with whom this severe touch-stone would, like the head of Medusa, put to flight all

their complacency. The afflictive dispensation is forgotten—and he on whom it was laid, is practically as indifferent to God and to eternity as before. The Sabbath services come to a close; and they are followed by the same routine of week-day worldliness as before. In neither the one case nor the other, do we see more of the radical influence of Christianity than in the sublime and melting influence of sacred music upon the soul; and all this tide of emotion is found to die away from the bosom, like the pathos or like the loveliness of a song.

The instances may be multiplied without number. A man may have a taste for eloqueuce, and eloquence the most touching or sublime may lift her pleading voice on the side of religion. A man may love to have his understanding stimulated by the ingenuities, or the resistless urgencies of an argument; and argument the most profound and the most overbearing, may put forth all the might of a constraining vehemence in behalf of religion. A man may feel the rejoicings of a conscious elevation, when some ideal scene of magnificence is laid before him; and where are these scenes so readily to be met with, as when led to expatiate in thought over the track of eternity, or to survey the wonders of creation, or to look to the magnitude of these great and universal interests which lie within the compass of religion? A man may have his attention riveted and regaled by that power of imitative description, which brings all the recollections of his own experience before him; which presents him with a faithful analysis of his own heart; which embodies in language such intimacies of observation and of feeling, as have often passed before his eyes, or played within his bosom, but had never been so truly or so ably pictured to the view of his remembrance. Now, all this may be done in the work of pressing the duties of religion; in the work of instancing the application of religion; in the work of pointing those allusions to life and to manners, which manifest the truth to the conscience, and plant such a conviction of sin, as forms the very basis of a sinner's religion. Now, in all these cases, I see other principles brought into action, and which may be in a state of most lively and vigorous movement, and be yet in a state of entire separation from the principle of religion. I will make bold to

say, on the strength of these illustrations, that as much delight may emanate from the pulpit, on an arrested audience beneath it, as ever emanated from the boards of a theatre—aye, and with as total a disjunction of mind too, in the one case as in the other, from the essence or the habit of religion. I recur to the test. I make my appeal to experience; and I put it to you all, whether your finding upon the subject do not agree with my saying about it, that a man may weep, and admire, and have many of his faculties put upon the stretch of their most intense gratification—his judgment established, and his fancy enlivened and his feelings overpowered, and his hearing charmed, as by the accents of heavenly persuasion, and all within him feasted by the rich and varied luxuries of an intellectual banquet!—Oh! it is cruel to frown unmannerly in the midst of so much satisfaction. But I must not forget that truth has her authority, as well as her sternness; and she forces me to affirm, that after all this has been felt and gone through, there might not be one principle which lies at the turning point of conversion, that has experienced a single movement—not one of its purposes be conceived—not one of its doings be accomplished—not one step of that repentance, which, if we have not, we perish, so much as entered upon—not one announcement of that faith, by which we are saved, admitted into a real and actual possession by the inner man. He has had his hour's entertainment, and willingly does he award this homage to the performer, that he hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument—but, in another hour, it fleets away from his remembrance, and and goes all to nothing, like the loveliness of a song.

Now, in bringing these Astronomical Discourses to a close, I feel it my duty to advert to this exhibition of character in man. The sublime and interesting topic which has engaged us, however feebly it may have been handled; however inadequately it may have been put in all its worth, and in all its magnitude before you; however short the representation of the speaker or the conception of the hearers may have been of that richness, and that greatness, and that loftiness, which belong to it; possesses in itself a charm to fix the attention, to regale the imagination, and to subdue the whole man into a delighted re-

verence; and, in a word, to beget such a solemnity of thought, and of emotion, as may occupy and enlarge the soul for hours together, as may waft it away from the grossness of ordinary life, and raise it to a kind of elevated calm above all its vulgarities and all its vexations.

Now, tell me whether the whole of this effect upon the feelings, may not be formed without the presence of religion. Tell me whether there might not be such a constitution of mind, that it may both want altogether that principle in virtue of which the doctrines of Christianity are admitted into the belief, and the duties of Christianity are admitted into a government over the practice—and yet, at the very same time, it may have the faculty of looking abroad over some scene of magnificence, and of being wrought up to ecstacy with the sense of all those glories among which it is expatiating. I want you to see clearly the distinction between these two attributes of the human character. They are, in truth, as different the one from the other, as a taste for the grand and the graceful of scenery differs from the appetite of hunger; and the one may both exist and have a most intense operation within the bosom of that very individual, who entirely disowns, and is entirely disgusted with the other. What! must a man be converted, ere from the most elevated peak of some Alpine wilderness, he becomes capable of feeling the force and the majesty of those great lineaments which the hand of nature has thrown around him, in the varied forms of precipice, and mountain, and the wave of mighty forests, and the rush of sounding waterfalls, and distant glimpses of human territory, and pinnacles of everlasting snow, and the sweep of that circling horizon, which folds in its ample embrace the whole of this noble amphitheatre? Tell me whether, without the aid of Christianity, or without a particle of reverence for the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved, a man may not kindle at such a perspective as this, into all the raptures, and into all the movements of a poetic elevation; and be able to render into the language of poetry, the whole of that sublime and beauteous imagery which adorns it; aye, and as if he were treading on the confines of a sanctuary which he has not entered, may he not mix up with the power and the en-

chantment of his description, such allusions to the presiding genius of the scene; or to the still but animating spirit of the solitude; or to the speaking silence of some myterious character which reigns throughout the landscape; or, in fine, to that eternal Spirit, who sits behind the elements he has formed, and combines them into all the varieties of a wide and a wondrous creation; might not all this be said and sung with an emphasis so moving, as to spread the colouring of piety over the pages of him who performs thus well upon his instrument; and yet, the performer himself have a conscience unmoved by a single warning of God's actual communication, and the judgment unconvinced, and the fears unawakened, and the life unreformed by it?

Now what is true of a scene on earth, is also true of that wider and more elevated scene which stretches over the immensity around it, into a dark and a distant unknown. Who does not feel an aggrandisement of thought and of faculty, when he looks abroad over the amplitudes of creation—when placed on a telescopic eminence, his aided eye can find a pathway to innumerable worlds—when that wondrous field, over which there had hung for many ages the mantle of so deep an obscurity, is laid open to him, and instead of a dreary and unpeopled solitude, he can see over the whole face of it such an extended garniture of rich and goodly habitations! Even the Atheist who tells us that the universe is self-existent and indestructible—even, he who instead of seeing the traces of a manifold wisdom in its manifold varieties, sees nothing in them all but the exquisite structures and the lofty dimensions of materialism—even he, who would despoil creation of its God, cannot look upon its golden suns, and their accompanying systems, without the solemn impression of a magnificence that fixes and overpowers him. Now, conceive such a belief of God as you all profess, to dawn upon his understanding. Let him become as one of yourselves—and so be put into the condition of rising from the sublime of matter to the sublime of mind. Let him now learn to subordinate the whole of this mechanism to the design and authority of a great presiding intelligence; and re-assembling all the members of the universe, however distant into one family, let him mingle

with his former conceptions of the grandeur which belonged to it, the conception of that eternal Spirit who sits enthroned on the immensity of his own wonders, and embraces all that he has made, within the ample scope of one great administration. Then will the images and the impressions of sublimity come in upon him from a new quarter. Then will another avenue be opened, through which a sense of grandeur may find its way into his soul, and have a mightier influence than ever to fill, and to elevate and to expand it. Then will be established a new and a noble association, by the aid of which all that he formerly looked upon as fair becomes more lovely; and all that he formerly looked upon as great, becomes more magnificent. But will you believe me, that even with this accession to his mind of ideas gathered from the contemplation of the Divinity; even with that pleasurable glow which steals over his imagination, when, he now thinks him of the majesty of God; even with as much of what you would call piety, as I fear is enough to soothe and to satisfy many of yourselves, and which stirs and kindles within you when you hear the goings forth of the Supreme set before you in the terms of a lofty representation; even with all this, I say there may be as wide a distance from the habit and the character of godliness, as if God was still atheistically disowned by him. Take the conduct of his life and the currency of his affections; and you may see as little upon them of the stamp of loyalty to God, or of reverence for any one of his authenticated proclamations, as you may see in him who offers his poetic incense to the genii, or weeps enraptured over the visions of a beauteous mythology. The sublime of Deity has wrought up his soul to a pitch of conscious and pleasing elevation—and yet this no more argues the will of Deity to have a practical authority over him, than does that tone of elevation which is caught by looking at the sublime of a naked materialism. The one and the other have their little hour of ascendency over him; and when he turns him to the rude and ordinary world, both vanish alike from his sensibilities as does the loveliness of a song.

To kindle and be elevated by a sense of the majesty of God, is one thing. It is totally another thing to feel a movement of

obedience to the will of God, under the impression of his rightful authority over all the ceatures whom he has formed. A man may have an imagination all alive to the former; while the latter never prompts him to one act of obedience; never leads him to compare his life with the requirements of the Lawgiver; never carries him from such a scrutiny as this, to the conviction of sin; never whispers such an accusation to the ear of his conscience, as causes him to mourn, and to be in heaviness for the guilt of his hourly and habitual rebellion; never shuts him up to the conclusion of the need of a Saviour; never humbles him to acquiescence in the doctrine of that revelation, which comes to his door with such a host of evidence, as even his own philosophy cannot bid away; never extorts a single believing prayer in the name of Christ, or points a single look, either of trust or of reverence, to his atonement; never stirs any effective movement of conversion; never sends an aspiring energy into his bosom after the aids of that Spirit, who alone can waken him out of his lethargies, and by the anointing which remaineth, can rivet and substantiate in his practice, those goodly emotions which have hitherto plied him with the deceitfulness of their momentary visits, and then capriciously abandoned him.

The mere majesty of God's power and greatness, when offered to your notice, lays hold of one of the faculties within you. The holiness of God, with his righteous claim of legislation, lays hold of another of these faculties. The difference between them is so great, that the one may be engrossed and interested to the full, while the other remains untouched, and in a state of entire dormancy. Now, it is no matter what it be that ministers delight to the former of these two faculties: If the latter be not arrested and put on its proper exercise, you are making no approximation whatever to the right habit and character of religion. There are a thousand ways in which we may contrive to regale your taste for that which is beauteous and majestic. It may find its gratification in the loveliness of a vale, or in the freer and bolder outlines of an upland situation, or in the terrors of a storm, or in the sublime contemplations of astronomy, or in the magnificent idea of a God who sends forth

the wakefulness of his omniscient eye, and the vigour of his upholding hand, throughout all the realms of nature and of providence. The mere taste of the human mind may get its ample enjoyment in each and in all of these objects, or in a vivid representation of them; nor does it make any material difference, whether, this representation be addressed to you from the stanzas of a poem, or from the recitations of a theatre, or finally from the discourses and the demonstations of a pulpit. And thus it is, that still on the impulse of the one principle only, people may come in gathering multitudes to the house of God; and share with eagerness in all the glow and bustle of a crowded attendance; and have their every eye directed to the speaker; and feel a responding movement in their bosom to his many appeals and his many arguments; and carry a solemn and overpowering impression of all the services away with them; and yet throughout the whole of this seemly exhibition, not one effectual knock may have been given at the door of conscience. The other principle may be as profoundly asleep, as if hushed into the insensibility of death. There is a spirit of deep slumber, it would appear, which the music of no description, even though attuned to a theme so lofty as the greatness and majesty of the Godhead, can ever charm away. Oh! it may have been a piece of parading insignificance altogether—the minister playing on his favorite instrument, and the people dissipating away their time on the charm and idle luxury of a theatrical emotion.

The religion of taste, is one thing. The religion of conscience, is another. I recur to the test. What is the plain and practical doing which ought to issue from the whole of our argument? If one lesson come more clearly or more authoritatively out of it than another, it is the supremacy of the Bible. If fitted to impress one movement rather than another, it is that movement of a docility, in virtue of which, man, with the feeling that he has all to learn, places himself in the attitude of a little child, before the book of the unsearchable God, who has designed to break his silence, and to transmit, even to our age of the world, a faithful record of his own communication. What progress then are you making in this movement? Are you, or

are you not, like new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby? How are you coming on in the work of casting down your lofty imaginations? With the modesty of true science, which is here at once with the humblest and most penitentiary feeling which Christianity can awaken, are you bending an eye of earnestness on the Bible, and appropriating its informations, and moulding your every conviction to its doctrines and its testimonies? How long, I beseech you, has this been your habitual exercise? By this time do you feel the darkness and the insufficiency of nature? Have you found your way to the need of an atonement? Have you learned the might and the efficacy which are given to the principle of faith? Have you longed with all your energies to realize it? Have you broken loose from the obvious misdoings of your former history? Are you convinced of your total deficiency from the spiritual obedience of the affections? Have you read of the Holy Ghost, by whom renewed in the whole desire and character of your mind, you are led to run with alacrity in the way of the commandments? Have you turned to its practical use, the important truth, that he has given to the believing prayers of all, who really want to be relieved from the power both of secret and of visible iniquity? I demand something more than the homage you have rendered to the pleasantness of the voice that has been sounding in your hearing. What I have now to urge upon you, is the bidding of the voice, to read, and to reform and to pray, and, in a word, to make your consistent step from the elevations of philosophy, to all those exercises, whether of doing or of believing, which mark the conduct of the earnest, and the devoted, and the subdued, and the aspiring Christian.

This brings under our view a most deeply interesting exhibition of human nature, which may often be witnessed among the cultivated orders of society. When a teacher of Christianity addresses himself to that principle of justice within us, in virtue of which we feel the authority of God to be a prerogative which righteously belongs to him, he is then speaking the appropriate language of religion, and is advancing its naked and appropriate claim over the obedience of mankind. He is then urging that pertinent and powerful consideration, upon which alone he

can never hope to obtain the ascendency of a practical influence over the purposes and the conduct of human beings. It is only by insisting on the moral claim of God to a right of government over his creatures, that he can carry their loyal subordination to the will of God. Let him keep by this single argument, and urge it upon the conscience, and then, without any of the other accompaniments of what is called christian oratory, he may bring convincingly home upon his hearers all the varieties of christian doctrine. He may establish within their minds the dominion of all that is essential in the faith of the New Testament. He may, by carrying out this principle of God's authority into all its applications, convince them of sin. He may lead them to compare the loftiness and spirituality of his law, with the habitual obstinacy of their own worldly affections. He may awaken them to the need of a Saviour. He may urge them to a faithful and submissive perusal of God's own communication. He may thence press upon them the truth and the immutability of their Sovereign. He may work in their hearts an impression of this emphatic saying, that God is not to be mocked—that his law must be upheld in all the significancy of its proclamations—and that either its severities must be discharged upon the guilty, or in some other way an adequate provision be be found for its outraged dignity, and its violated sanctions. Thus may he lead them to flee for refuge to the blood of the atonement. And he may further urge upon his hearers, how, such is the enormity of sin, that it is not enough to have found an expiation for it; how its power and its existence must be eradicated from the hearts of all, who are to spend their eternity in the mansions of the celestial; how, for this purpose, an expedient is made known to us in the New Testament; how a process must be described upon earth, to which there is given the appropriate name of sanctification; how, at the very commencement of every true course of discipleship, this process is entered upon with a purpose in the mind of forsaking all; how nothing short of a single devotedness to the will of God, will ever carry us forward through the successive stages of this holy and elevated career; how, to help the infirmities of our nature, the Spirit is ever in readiness to be given to those who ask

it ; and that thus the life of every Christian becomes a life of entire dedication to Him who died for us—a life of prayer, and vigilance, and close dependance on the grace of God ; and, as the infallible result of the plain but powerful and peculiar teaching of the Bible, a life of vigorous unwearied activity in the doing of all the commandments.

Now, this I would call the essential business of Christianity. This is the truth as it is in Jesus, in its naked and unassociated simplicity. In the work of urging it, nothing more might have been done, than to present certain views, which may come with as great clearness, and freshness, and take as full possession of the mind of a peasant, as of the mind of a philosopher. There is a sense of God, and of the rightful allegiance that is due to him. There are plain and practical appeals to the conscience. There is a comparison of the state of the heart, with the requirements of a law which proposes to take the heart under its obedience. There is the inward discernment of its coldness about God ; of its unconcern about the matters of duty and of eternity ; of its devotion to the forbidden objects of sense ; of its constant tendency to nourish within its own receptacles, the very element and principle of rebellion, and in virtue of this, to send forth the stream of an hourly and accumulating disobedience over those doings of the outer man, which make up his visible history in the world. There is such an earnest and overpowering impression of all this, as will fix a man down to the single object of deliverance ; as will make him awake only to those realities which have a significant and substantial bearing on the case that engrosses him ; as will teach him to nauseate all the impertinences of tasteful and ambitious description ; as will attach him to the truth in its simplicity ; as will fasten his every regard upon the Bible, where, if he persevere in the work of honest inquiry, he will soon be made to perceive the accordancy between its statements, and all those movements of fear, or guilt, or deeply-felt necessity, or conscious darkness, stupidity, and unconcern about the matters of salvation, which pass within his own bosom ; in a word, as will endear him to that plainness of speech, by which his own experience is set evidently before him, and that plain phraseology of scripture, which is

best fitted to bring home to him the doctrine of redemption, in all the truth, and in all the preciousness of its applications.

Now, the whole of this work may be going on, and that too in the wisest and most effectual manner without so much as one particle of incense being offered to any of the subordinate principles of the human constitution. There may be no fascinations of style. There may no magnificence of description. There may be no poignancy of acute and irresistible argument. There may be a rivetted attention on the part of those whom the Spirit of God hath awakened to seriousness about the plain and affecting realities of conversion. Their conscience may be stricken, and their appetite be excited for an actual settlement of mind on those points about which they feel restless and unconfirmed. Such as these are vastly too much engrossed with the exigencies of their condition, to be repelled by the homeliness of unadorned truth. And thus it is, that while the loveliness of the song has done so little in helping on the influences of the gospel, our men of simplicity and prayer have done so much for it. With a deep and earnest impression of the truth themselves, they have made manifest that truth to the consciences of others. Missionaries have gone forth with no other preparation than the simple Word of the Testimony—and thousands have owned its power, by being both the hearers of the word and the doers of it also. They have given us the experiment in a state of unmingled simplicity; and we learn, from the success of their noble example, that without any one human expedient to charm the ear, the heart may, by the naked instrumentality of the Word of God, urged with plainness on those who feel its deceit and its worthlessness, be charmed to an entire acquiescence in the revealed way of God, and have impressed upon it the genuine stamp and character of godliness.

Could the sense of what is due to God, be effectually *stirred* up within the human bosom, it would lead to a practical carrying of all the lessons of Christianity. Now, to awaken *this* moral sense, there are certain simple relations between the creature and the Creator, which must be clearly apprehended, and manifested with power unto the conscience. We believe, that however much philosophers may talk about the compara-

tive ease of forming those conceptions which are simple, they will, if in good earnest after a right footing with God, soon discover in their own minds, all that darkness and incapacity about spiritual things, which are so broadly announced to us in the New Testament. And, oh! it is a deeply interesting spectacle, to behold a man, who can take a masterly and commanding survey over the field of some human speculation, who can clear his discriminated way through all the turns and ingenuities of some human argument, who by the march of a mighty and resistless demonstration, can scale with assured footstep the sublimities of science, and from his firm stand on the eminence he has won, can descry some wondrous range of natural or intellectual truth spread out in subordination before him;—and yet this very man may, in reference to the moral and authoritative claims of the Godhead, be in a state of utter apathy and blindness! All his attempts, either at the spiritual discernment, or the practical impression of this doctrine, may be arrested and baffled by the weight of some great inexplicable impotency. A man of homely talents, and still homelier education, may see what he cannot see, and feel what he cannot feel; and wise and prudent as he is, there may lie the barrier of an obstinate and impenetrable concealment, between his accomplished mind, and those things which are revealed unto babes.

But while his mind is thus utterly devoid of what may be called the main or elemental principle of theology, he may have a far quicker apprehension, and have his taste and his feelings much more powerfully interested, than the simple Christian who is beside him, by what may be called the circumstantials of theology. He can throw a wider and more rapid glance over the magnitudes of creation. He can be more delicately alive to the beauties and the sublimities which abound in it. He can, when the idea of a presiding God is suggested to him, have a more kindling sense of his natural majesty, and be able, both in imagination and in words, to surround the throne of the Divinity by the blazonry of more great, and splendid, and elevating images. And yet, with all those powers of conception which he does possess, he may not possess that on which practical Christianity hinges. The moral relation between him and

God, may neither be effectively perceived, nor faithfully proceeded on. Conscience may be in a state of the most entire dormancy, and the man be regaling himself with the magnificence of God, while he neither loves God, nor believes God, nor obeys God.

And here I cannot but remark, how much effect and simplicity go together in the annals of Moravianism. The men of this truly interesting denomination, address themselves exclusively to that principle of our nature on which the proper influence of Christianity turns. Or, in other words, they take up the subject of the gospel message, that message devised by him who knew what was in man, and who, therefore, knew how to make the right and the suitable application to man.—They urge the plain word of the Testimony; and they pray for a blessing from on high; and that thick impalpable veil, by which the god of this world blinds the hearts of men who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should enter into them—that veil, which no power of philosophy can draw aside, gives way to the demonstration of the Spirit; and thus it is, that a clear perception of scriptural truth, and all the freshness and permanency of its moral influences, are to be met with among men who have just emerged from the rudest and the grossest barbarity.—Oh! when one looks at the number and the greatness of their achievements; when he thinks of the change they have made on materials so coarse and so unpromising; when he eyes the villages they have formed; and around the whole of that engaging perspective by which they have chequered and relieved the grim solitude of the desert, he witnesses the love, and listens to the piety of reclaiming savages;—who would not long to be in possession of the charm by which they have wrought this wondrous transformation—who would not willingly exchange for it all the parade of human eloquence, and all the confidence of human argument—and for the wisdom of winning souls, who is there that would not rejoice to throw the loveliness of the song, and all the insignificancy of its passing fascinations, away from him?

And yet it is right that every cavil against Christianity should be met, and every argument for it be exhibited, and all the gra-

ces and sublimities of its doctrine be held out to their merited admiration. And if it be true, as it certainly is, that throughout the whole of this process, a man may be carried rejoicingly along from the mere indulgence of his taste, and the mere play and exercise of his understanding; while conscience is untouched, and the supremacy of moral claims upon the heart and the conduct is practically disowned by him—it is further right that this should be adverted to; and that such a meloncholy unhingement in the constitution of man should be fully laid open; and that he should be driven out of the seductive complacency which he is so apt to cherish, merely because he delights in the loveliness of the song; and that he should be urged with the imperiouness of a demand which still remains unsatisfied, to turn him from the corrupt indifference of nature, and to become personally a religious man; and that he should be assured how all the gratification he felt in listening to the word which respected the kingdom of God, will be of no avail, unless that kingdom come to himself in power—that it will only go to heighten the perversity of his character—that it will not extenuate his real and practical ungodliness, but will serve most fearfully to aggravate the condemnation of it.

With a religion so argumentable as ours, it may be easy to gather out of it a feast for the human understanding. With a religion so magnificent as ours, it may be easy to gather out of it a feast for the human imagination. But with a religion so humbling, and so strict, and so spiritual, it is not easy to mortify the pride; or to quell the strong enmity of nature; or to arrest the currency of the affections; or to turn the constitutional habits; or to pour a new complexion over the moral history; or to stem the domineering influence of things seen and things sensible; or to invest faith with a practical supremacy; or to give its objects such a vivacity of influence as shall overpower the near and the hourly impressions, that are ever emanating upon man from a seducing world. It is here that man feels himself treading upon the limit of his helplessness. It is here that he sees where the strength of nature ends; and the power of grace must either be put forth, or leave him to grope his darkling way, without one inch of progress to-

wards the life and the substance of Christianity. It is here that a barrier rises on the contemplation of the inquirer—the barrier of separation between the carnal and the spiritual, and on which he may idly waste the every energy which belongs to him, in the enterprise of surmounting it. It is here, that after having walked the round of nature's acquisitions, and lavished upon the truth of all his ingenuities, and surveyed it in its every palpable character of grace and majesty; he will still feel himself on a level with the simplest and most untutored of the species. He needs the power of a living manifestation. He needs the annointing which remaineth. He needs that which fixes and perpetuates a stable revolution upon the character, and in virtue of which he may be advanced from the state of one who hears, and is delighted, to the state of one who hears, and is a doer. Oh! how strikingly is the experience even of vigorous and accomplished nature at one on this point with the announcements of revelation, that to work this change, there must be the putting forth of a peculiar agency; and that it is an agency, which, withheld from the exercise of loftiest talent, is often brought down on an impressed audience, through the humblest of all instrumentality, with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power.

Think it not enough, that you carry in your bosom an expanding sense of the magnificence of creation. But pray for a subduing sense of the authority of the Creator. Think it not enough, that with the justness of a philosophical discernment, you have traced that boundary which hems in all the possibilities of human attainment, and have found that all beyond it is a dark and fathomless unknown. But let this modesty of science be carried, as in consistency it ought, to the question of revelation, and let all the antipathies of nature be schooled to acquiescence in the authentic testimonies of the Bible.—Think it not enough that you have looked with sensibility and wonder at the representation of God throned in immensity, yet combining with the vastness of his entire superintendence, a most thorough inspection into all the minute and countless diversities of existence. Think of your own heart as one of these diversities; and that he ponders all its tendencies; and has an

eye upon all its movements; and marks all its waywardness; and, God of judgment as he is, records its every secret, and its every sin, in the book of his remembrance. Think it not enough, that you have been led to associate a grandeur with the salvation of the New Testament; when made to understand that it draws upon it the regards of an arrested universe. How is it arresting your own mind? What has been the earnestness of your personal regards towards it? And tell me, if all its faith, and all its repentance, and all its holiness are not disowned by you? Think it not enough, that you have felt a sentimental charm when angels were pictured to your fancy as beckoning you to their mansions, and anxiously looking to the every symptom of your grace and reformation. Oh! be constrained by the power of all this tenderness, and yield yourselves up in a practical obedience to the call of the Lord God merciful and gracious. Think it not enough that you have shared for a moment in the deep and busy interest of that arduous conflict which is now going on for a moral ascendency over the species. Remember the conflict is for each of you individually; and let this alarm you into a watchfulness against the power of every temptation, and a cleaving dependence upon him through whom alone you will be more than conquerors. Above all, forget not that while you only hear and are delighted, you are still under nature's powerlessness, and nature's condemnation—and that the foundation is not laid, the mighty and essential change is not accomplished, the transition from death unto life is not undergone, the saving faith is not formed, nor the passage taken from darkness to the marvellous light of the gospel, till you are both hearers of the word and doers also. "For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straitway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

APPENDIX.

THE writer of these Discourses has drawn up the following compilation of passages from Scripture, as serving to illustrate or to confirm the leading arguments which have been employed in each separate division of his subject.

DISCOURSE I.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Gen. i. 1.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. Gen. ii. 1.

Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Deut. x. 14.

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. Deut. xxxiii. 26.

And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. 2 Kings xix. 15.

For all the gods of the people are Idols; but the Lord made the heavens. 1 Chronicles xvi. 26.

Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein; and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worship thee. Nehemiah ix. 6.

Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea; which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. Job ix. 8. 9.

He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. Job xxvi. 7.

By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens. Job xxvi. 13.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Psalm xix. 1.

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Psalm xxxiii. 6.

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. Psalm cii. 25.

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain. Psalm civ. 2.

He appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down. Psalm civ. 19.

You are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth. The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's but the earth hath he given to the children of men. Psalm cxv. 15, 16.

My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. Psalm cxxi. 2.

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Psalm cxxiv. 8.

The Lord that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion. Psalm cxxxiv. 3.

Which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is. Psalm cxlvi. 6.

The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. Prov. iii. 19.

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in a scale, and the hills in a balance. Isa. xl. 12.

It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heaven as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Isa. xl. 22.

Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein. Isa. xlii. 5.

Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself. Isa. xliv. 24.

I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. Isa. xlv. 12.

For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it, he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited. Isa. xlv. 18.

Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens; when I call unto them, they stand up together. Isa. xlviii. 13.

He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. Jer. x. 12.

Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee. Jer. xxxii. 17.

He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding. Jer. li. 15.

It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth, The Lord is his name. Amos ix. 6.

We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein. Acts xiv. 15.

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. Heb. i. 2.

Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thine hands. Heb. i. 10.

Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. Heb. xi. 3.

DISCOURSE II.

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. Deut. xxix. 29.

I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause; Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number. Job v. 8, 9.

Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number. Job ix. 10.

Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? Job xi. 7.

Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? Job xv. 8.

Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand? Job xxvi. 14.

Behold, God is great, and we know him not; neither can the number of his years be searched out. Job xxxvi. 26.

God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend. Job xxxvii. 5.

Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out; he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice. Job xxxvii. 23.

Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Psalm lxxvii. 19.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. Psalm cxlv. 3.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isa. lv. 8, 9.

Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matt. xviii. 3.

Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein. Luke xviii. 17.

O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Rom. xi. 33, 24.

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. 1 Cor. iii. 18.

For if a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. Gal. vi. 3.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Col. ii. 8.

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called. 1 Tim. vi. 20.

DISCOURSE III.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much

less this house that I have builded? Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day. That thine eyes may be open towards this house night and day, even towards the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there; that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make towards this place. 1 Kings viii. 27, 28, 29.

For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven. Job xxviii. 24.

For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. Job xxxiv. 21.

Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly. Psalm cxxxviii. 6.

O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising: thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord! thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? Psalm cxxxix. 1—7.

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them they are more in number than the sand: when I awake I am still with thee. Psalms cxxxix. 17, 18.

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. Prov. xv. 3.

Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. Jer. xxiii. 24.

Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow? they toil not, neither do they spin; And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Matt. vi. 26, 28, 29, 30.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Heb. iv. 13.

DISCOURSE IV.

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. Gen. xxviii. 12.

For a thousand years in thy sight, are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Psalm xc. 4.

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Isa. li. 6.

For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Matt. xvi. 27.

When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. Matt. xxv. 31.

Also, I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God. Luke xii. 8, 9.

And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. John i. 51.

We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. 1 Cor. v. 9.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11.

When the lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. 2 Thess. i. 7.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angles, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things- 1 Tim. v. 21.

And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. Heb. i. 6.

But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the

living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angles, To the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. Hebrews xii. 22, 23, 24.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. 2 Peter iii. 8, 9, 10.

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, And sware by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer. Rev. x. 5, 6.

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation ; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. Rev. xiv. 9, 10.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. Rev. xx. 11.

DISCOURSE V.

And Nathan departed unto his house ; and the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David, therefore, besought God for the child : and David fasted and went in and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth ; but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead ; for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake

unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice, how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead; therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, he is dead. Then David arose from the earth and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and, when he required, they set bread before him and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was alive: but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, while the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. 2 Sam. xii. 15—23.

The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Psalm xxxiv. 7.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. Psalm xci. 2.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other. Matt. xxiv 31.

Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Luke xv. 10.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. Heb. 1. 14.

DISCOURSE VI.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. Matt. iv. 1.

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. Matt. xiii. 39, 41.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Matt. xxv. 41.

And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of

an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth; art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art: the Holy One of God. Luke iv. 33, 34.

Those by the way-side are they that hear; then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. Luke viii. 12.

But he knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house, falleth. If satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. Luke xi. 17, 18.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. John viii. 44.

And supper being ended, (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.) John xiii. 2.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Acts v. 3.

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Acts xxvi. 18.

And the God of peace shall bruise satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be with you. Amen. Rom. xvi. 20.

Lest satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. 2 Cor. ii. 11.

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 2 Cor. iv. 4.

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Eph. ii. 2.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Eph. vi. 11, 12.

For some are already turned aside after satan. 1 Timothy v. 15.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil. Heb. ii. 14.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James iv. 1.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. 1 Peter v. 8, 9.

He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. 1 John iii. 8, 10.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that it is in the world. 1 John iv. 4.

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. Jude 6.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. Rev. iii. 5.

And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Wo to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. Rev. xii. 7, 8, 9, 12.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. And the devil that deceived them was cast into a lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, forever and ever. Rev, xx. 2, 7, 10.

DISCOURSE VII.

Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it. Matt. vii. 24—27.

At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father! Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Matt. xi. 25.

Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. Luke xiii. 26, 27.

For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. Rom. ii. 13.

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2, 4, 5, 12, 13, 14.

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. 1 Cor. iii. 19.

For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. 1 Cor. iv. 20.

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think

any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God: who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 2 Cor. iii. 3, 5, 6.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power. Eph. i. 17, 18, 19.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Eph. ii. 1, 10.

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.—1 Thes. i. 5.

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. James i. 18, 22—25.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 1 Peter ii. 9.

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. 1 John ii. 20, 27.

SERMONS

ON

THE DEPRAVITY

OF

HUMAN NATURE.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE doctrine which is most urgently, and most frequently insisted on in the following volume, is that of the depravity of human nature, and it were certainly cruel to expose the unworthiness of man for the single object of disturbing him. But the cruelty is turned into kindness, when, along with the knowledge of the disease, there is offered an adequate and all-powerful remedy. It is impossible to have a true perception of our own character, in the sight of God, without feeling our need of acquittal; and in opposition to every obstacle, which the justice of God seems to hold out to it, this want is provided for in the Gospel. And it is equally impossible, to have a true perception of the character of God, as being utterly repugnant to sin, without feeling the need of amendment; and in opposition to every obstacle, which the impotency of man holds out to it, this want is also provided for in the Gospel. There we behold the amplest securities for the peace of the guilty. But there do we also behold securities equally ample for their progress, and their perfection in holiness. Insomuch, that in every genuine disciple of the New Testament, we not only see one who, delivered from the burden of his fears, rejoices in hope of a coming glory—but we see one who, set free from the bondage of corruption, and animated by a new love and a new desire, is honest in the purposes, and strenuous in the efforts, and abundant in the works of obedience. He feels the instigations of sin, and in this respect he differs from an angel. But he follows not the instigations of sin, and in this respect he differs from a natural or unconverted man. He may experience the motions of the flesh—but he walks not after the flesh. So that in him we may view the picture of a man, struggling with effect against his earth-born propensities, and yet hateful to him-

self for the very existence of them—holier than any of the people around him, and yet humbler than them all—realizing, from time to time, a positive increase to the grace and excelleney of his character, and yet becoming more tenderly conscious every day of its remaining deformities—gradually expanding in attainment as well as in desire, towards the light and the liberty of heaven, and yet groaning under a yoke from which death alone will fully emancipate him.

When time and space have restrained an author of sermons from entering on what may be called the ethics of Christianity, —it is the more incumbent on him to avouch of the doctrine of the gospel, that while it provides directly for the peace of a sinner, it provides no less directly and efficiently for the purity of his practice—that faith in this doctrine never terminates in itself, but is a mean to holiness as an end—and that he who truly accepts of Christ, as the alone foundation of his meritorious acceptance before God, is stimulated, by the circumstances of his new condition, to breathe holy purposes, and to abound in holy performances. He is created anew unto good works. He is made the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus.

The anxious enforcement of one great lesson on the part of a writer, generally proceeds from the desire to effect a full and adequate conveyance, into the mind of another, of some truth which has filled his own mind, by a sense of its importance; and, in offering this volume to the public, the author is far from being insensible to the literary defects that from this cause may be charged upon it. He knows, in particular, that throughout these discourses there is a frequent recurrence of the same idea, though generally expressed in different language, and with some new speciality, either in its bearing or in its illustration. And he further knows, that the habit of expatiating on one topic may be indulged to such a length, as to satiate the reader, and that, to a degree, far beyond the limits of his forbearance.

And yet, if a writer be conscious that, to gain a reception for his favorite doctrine, he must combat with certain elements of opposition, in the taste, or the pride, or the indolence, of those whom he is addressing, this will only serve to make him

the more importunate, and so to betray him still farther into the fault of redundancy. If the lesson he is urging be of an intellectual character, he will labour to bring it home, as nearly as possible, to the understanding. If it be a moral lesson, he will labour to bring it home, as nearly as possible, to the heart. It is difficult, and it were hard to say in how far it would be right, to restrain this propensity in the pulpit, where the high matters of salvation are addressed to a multitude of individuals, who bring before the minister every possible variety of taste and of capacity; and it is no less difficult, when the compositions of the pulpit are transferred to the press, to detach from them a peculiarity by which their whole texture may be pervaded, and thus to free them from what may be counted by many to be the blemish of a very great and characteristic deformity.

There is, however, a difference between such truths as are merely of a speculative nature, and such as are allied with practice and moral feeling; and much ought to be conceded to this difference. With the former, all repetition may often be superfluous; with the latter, it may just be by earnest repetition, that their influence comes to be thoroughly established over the mind of an inquirer. And, if so much as one individual be gained over in this way to the cause of righteousness, he is untrue to the spirit and to the obligations of his office, who would not, for the sake of this one, willingly hazard all the rewards, and all the honours of literary estimation.

And, if there be one truth which, more than another, should be habitually presented to the notice, and proposed to the conviction of fallen creatures, it is the humbling truth of their own depravity. This is a truth which may be recognized and read in every exhibition of unrenewed nature; but it often lurks under a specious disguise, and it is surely of the utmost practical importance to unveil and elicit a principle, which, when admitted into the heart, may be considered as the great basis of a sinner's religion.

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SERMON I.

THE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

1 CORINTHIANS, ii. 4, 5.

"And my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man but in the power of God."

PAUL, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, has expressed himself to the same effect as in the text, in the following words: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit."

In both these passages, the Apostle points to a speciality in the work of a Christian teacher,—a something essential to its success, and, which is not essential to the proficiency of scholars in the ordinary branches of education,—an influence that is beyond the reach of human power and human wisdom; and to obtain which, immediate recourse must be had, in the way of prayer and dependence, to the power of God. Without attempting a full exposition of these different verses, we shall, first, endeavour to direct your attention to that part of the work of a Christian teacher, which it has in common with any other kind of education; and, secondly, offer a few remarks on the speciality that is adverted to in the text.

I. And here it must be admitted, that even in the ordinary branches of human learning, the success of the teacher, on the one hand, and the proficiency of the scholars on the other, are

still dependent on the will of God. It is true, that in this case, we are not so ready to feel our dependence. God is apt to be overlooked in all those cases where he acts with uniformity. Wherever we see, what we call, the operation of a law of nature, we are apt to shut our eyes against the operation of his hand, and faith in the constancy of this law, is sure to beget, in the mind, a sentiment of independence on the power and will of the Deity. Now, in the matters of human education, God acts with uniformity. Let there be zeal and ability on the part of the teacher, and an ordinary degree of aptitude on the part of the taught,—and the result of their vigorous and well sustained co-operation may in general be counted upon. Let the parent, who witnesses his son's capacity, and his generous ambition for improvement, send him to a well qualified instructor, and he will be filled with the hopeful sentiment of his future eminence, without any reference to God whatever,—without so much as ever thinking of his purpose or of his agency in the matter, or its once occurring to him to make the proficiency of his son the subject of prayer. This is the way in which nature, by the constancy of her operations, is made to usurp the place of God: and it goes far to spread, and to establish the delusion, when we attend to the obvious fact, that a man of the most splendid genius may be destitute of piety; that he may fill the office of an instructor with the greatest talent and success, and yet be without reverence for God, and practically disown him; and that thousands of our youth may issue every year warm from the schools of Philosophy, stored with all her lessons, and adorned with all her accomplishments, and yet be utter strangers to the power of godliness, and be filled with an utter distaste and antipathy for its name. All this helps on the practical conviction, that common education is a business, with which prayer and the exercise of dependence on God, have no concern. It is true that a Christian parent will see through the vanity of this delusion. Instructed to make his requests known unto God in all things, he will not depose him from the supremacy of his power and of his government over this one thing,—he will commit to God the progress of his son in every one branch of education he may put him to,—and, knowing that the

talent of every teacher, and the continuance of his zeal, and his powers of communication, and his faculty of interesting the attention of his pupils,—that all these are the gifts of God, and may be withdrawn by him at pleasure,—he will not suffer the regular march and movement of what is visible or created to cast him out of his dependence on the Creator.—He will see that every one element which enters into the business of education, and conspires to the result of an accomplished and a well-informed scholar is in the hand of the Deity, and he will pray for the continuation of these elements,—and while science is raising her wondrous monuments, and drawing the admiration of the world after her,—it remains to be seen, on the day of the revelation of hidden things, whether the prayers of the humble and derided Christian, for a blessing on those to whom he has confided the object of his tenderness, have not sustained the vigor and the brilliancy of those very talents on which the world is lavishing the idolatry of her praise.

Let us now conceive the very ablest of these teachers, to bring all his powers and all his accomplishments, to bear on the subject of Christianity. Has he skill in the languages? The very same process by which he gets at the meaning of any ancient author, carries him to a fair and faithful rendering of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Has he a mind enlightened and exercised on questions of erudition? The very same principles which qualify him to decide on the genuineness of any old publication, enable him to demonstrate the genuineness of the Bible, and how fully sustained it is on the evidence of history. Has he that sagacity and comprehension of talent, by which he can seize on the leading principles which run through the writings of some eminent philosopher? This very exercise may be gone through on the writings of Inspiration; and the man, who, with the works of Aristotle before him can present the world with the best system or summary of his principles, might transfer these very powers to the works of the Apostles and Evangelists, and present the world with a just and interesting survey of the doctrines of our faith. And thus it is, that the man who might stand the highest of his fellows in the field of ordinary scholarship, might turn his entire mind to

the field of Christianity; and, by the very same kind of talent, which would have made him the most eminent of all the philosophers, he might come to be counted the most eminent of all the theologians; and he who could have reared to his fame some monument of literary genius, might now, by the labours of his midnight oil, rear some beauteous and consistent fabric of orthodoxy, strengthened, in all its parts, by one unbroken chain of reasoning, and recommended throughout by the powers of a persuasive and captivating eloquence.

So much for the talents which a Christian teacher may employ, in common with other teachers, and even though they did make up all the qualifications necessary for his office, there would still be a call, as we said before, for the exercise of dependence upon God. Well do we know, that both he and his hearers would be apt to put their faith in the uniformity of nature; and forgetting that it is the inspiration of the Almighty which giveth and preserveth the understanding of all his creatures, might be tempted to repose that confidence in man, which displaces God from the sovereignty that belongs to him. But what we wish to prepare you for, by the preceding observations, is, that you may understand the altogether peculiar call, that there is for dependence on God in the case of a Christian teacher. We have made a short enumeration of those talents which a teacher of Christianity might possess, in common with other teachers; but it is for the purpose of proving that he might possess them all, and heightened to such a degree, if you will, as would have made him illustrious on any other field, and yet be utterly destitute of powers for acquiring himself, or of experience for teaching others, that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ which is life everlasting.

With the many brilliant and imposing things which he may have, there is one thing which he may not have, and the want of that one thing may form an invincible barrier to his usefulness in the vineyard of Christ. If, conscious that he wants it, he seeks to obtain from God the sufficiency which is not in himself, then he is in a likely way of being put in possession of that power, which alone is mighty to the pulling down of strong holds. But if he, on the one hand, proudly conceiving the suf-

ficiency to be in himself, enters with aspiring confidence into the field of argument, and think that he is to carry all before him, by a series of invincible demonstrations; or, if his people, on the other hand, ever ready to be set in motion by the idle impulse of novelty, or to be seduced by the glare of human accomplishments, come in trooping multitudes around him, and hang on the eloquence of his lips, or the wisdom of his able and profound understanding, a more unchristian attitude cannot be conceived, nor shall we venture to compute the weekly accumulation of guilt which may come upon the parties, when such a business as this is going on. How little must the presence of God be felt in that place where the high functions of the pulpit are degraded into a stipulated exchange of entertainment on the one side, and of admiration on the other; and surely it were a sight to make angels weep when a weak and vapouring mortal, surrounded by his fellow sinners, and hastening to the grave and the judgment along with them, finds it a dearer object to his bosom, to regale his hearers by the exhibition of himself, than to do in plain earnest the work of his Master, and urge on the business of repentance and of faith by the impressive simplicities of the Gospel.

II. This brings us to the second head of discourse, under which we shall attempt to give you a clear view of what that is which constitutes a speciality in the work of a Christian teacher. And to carry you at once by a few plain instances to the matter we are aiming to impress upon you, let us suppose a man to take up his Bible, and with the same powers of attention and understanding which enable him to comprehend the subject of any other book, there is much in this book also which he will be able to perceive and to talk of intelligently. Thus, for example, he may come, by the mere exercise of his ordinary powers, to understand, that it is the Holy Spirit which taketh of the things of Christ and showeth them to the mind of man. But is not his understanding of this truth, as it is put down in the plain language of the New Testament, a very different thing from the Holy Spirit actually taking of these things and showing them unto him? Again, he will be able to say, and to annex a plain meaning to what he says, that man is rescued from his natural

darkness about the things of God, by God who created the light out of darkness shining in his heart, and giving him the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. But is not his saying this, and understanding this, by taking up these words in the same obvious way in which any man of plain and honest understanding would do, a very different thing from God actually putting forth his creative energy upon him, and actually shining upon his heart, and giving him that light and that knowledge which are expressed in the passage here alluded to? Again, by the very same exercise wherewith he renders the sentence of an old author into his own language, and perceives the meaning of that sentence, will he annex a meaning to the following sentence of the Bible—"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But the mere dint of that shrewdness and sagacity with which nature has endowed him, he will perceive a meaning here which you will readily acknowledge could not be perceived by a man in a state of idiotism. In the case of the idiot, there is a complete barrier against his ever acquiring that conception of the meaning of this passage, which is quite competent to a man of a strong and accomplished understanding. For the sake of illustration, we may conceive this poor outcast from the common light of humanity, in some unaccountable fit of attention, listening to the sound of these words, and making some strenuous but abortive attempts to arrive at the same comprehension of them with a man whose reason is entire. But he cannot shake off the fetters which the hand of nature has laid upon his understanding; and he goes back again to the dimness and delirium of his unhappy situation; and his mind locks itself up in the prison-hold of its confined and darkened faculties; and if, in his mysterious state of existence, he formed any conception whatever of the words now uttered in your hearing, we may rest assured that it stands distinguished by a wide and impassable chasm, from the conception of him, who has all the common powers and perceptions of the species.

Now, we would ask what kind of conception is that which a

man of entire faculties may form? Only grant us the undeniable truth, that he may understand how he cannot discern the things of the Spirit, unless the Spirit reveal them to him; and yet with this understanding, he may not be one of those in behalf of whom the Spirit hath actually interposed with his peculiar office of revelation; and then you bring into view another barrier, no less insurmountable than that which fixes an immutable distinction between the conceptions of an idiot and of a man of sense,—even that wonderful barrier which separates the natural from the spiritual man. You can conceive him struggling with every power which nature has given him to work his way through this barrier. You can conceive him vainly attempting, by some energies of his own, to force an entrance into that field of light where every object of faith has the bright colouring of reality thrown over it,—where he can command a clear view of the things of eternity,—where spiritual truth comes home with effect upon his every feeling and his every conviction,—where he can expatiate at freedom over a scene of manifestation, which the world knoweth not,—and breathe such a peace, and such a joy, and such a holiness, and such a superiority to time, and such a devotedness of all his affections to the things which are above, as no man of the highest natural wisdom can ever reach with all his attention to the Bible, and all the efforts of his sagacity, however painful, to unravel, and to compare and to comprehend its passages. And it is indeed a deeply interesting object to see a man of powerful understanding thus visited with an earnest desire after the light of the gospel, and toiling at the entrance with all the energies which belong to him,—pressing into the service all the resources of argument and philosophy,—mustering to the high enterprise, his attention, and his conception, and his reason, and his imagination, and the whole host of his other faculties, on which science has conferred her imposing names, and laid before us in such a pompous catalogue, as might tempt us to believe, that man, by one mighty grasp of his creative mind, can make all truth his own, and range at pleasure over the wide variety of her dominions. How natural to think that the same powers and habits of investigation which carried him to so respectable a height in the nat-

ural sciences will enable him to clear his way through all the darknesses of theology. It is well that he is seeking,—for if he persevere and be in earnest, he will obtain an interest in the promise, and will at length find;—but not till he find, in the progress of those inquiries on which he entered with so much alacrity, and prosecuted with so much confidence, that there is a barrier between him and the spiritual discernment of his Bible, which all the powers of philosophy cannot scale,—not till he find, that he must cast down his lofty imaginations, and put the pride of all his powers and his pretensions away from him,—not till he find, that divested of those fancies which deluded his heart into a feeling of its own sufficiency, he must become like a little child or one of those babes to whom God reveals the things which he hides from the wise and from the prudent,—not till he find, that the attitude of self dependence must be broken down and he be brought to acknowledge that the light he is aspiring after, is not created by himself, but must be made to shine upon him at the pleasure of another,—not in short, till humbled by the mortifying experience that many a simple cottager who reads his Bible and loves his Saviour has got before him, he puts himself on a level with the most illiterate of them all, and prays that light and truth may beam on his darkened understanding from the sanctuary of God.

We read of the letter, and we read also of the spirit, of the New Testament. It would require a volume, rather than a single paragraph of a single sermon, to draw the line between the one and the other. But you will readily acknowledge that there are many things of this book which a man, though untaught by the Spirit of God, may be made to know. One of the simplest instances is, he may learn the number of chapters in every book, and the number of verses in every chapter. But is this all? No,—for by the natural exercise of his memory he may be able to master all its historical information. And is this all? No for by the natural exercise of his judgment he may compare scripture with scripture,—he may learn what its doctrines are,—he may demonstrate the orthodoxy of every one article in our national confession,—he may rank among the ablest and most judicious of the commentators,—he may read, and

with understanding, too, many a ponderous volume,—he may store himself with the learning of many generations,—he may be familiar with all the systems, and have mingled with all the controversies,—and yet, with a mind supporting as it does the burden of the erudition of whole libraries, he may have gotten to himself no other wisdom than the wisdom of the letter of the New Testament. The man's creed, with all its arranged and its well weighed articles, may be no better than the dry bones in the vision of Ezekiel, put together into a skeleton, and fastened with sinews, and covered with flesh and skin, and exhibiting to the eye of the spectators, the aspect, and the lineaments of a man, but without breath, and remaining so, till the Spirit of God breathed into it, and it lived. And it is in truth a sight of wonder, to behold a man who has carried his knowledge of Scripture as far as the wisdom of man can carry it,—to see him blest with all the light which nature can give, but labouring under all the darkness which no power of nature can dispel,—to see this man of many accomplishments, who can bring his every power of demonstration to bear upon the Bible, carrying in his bosom a heart uncheered by any one of its consolations, unmoved by the influence of any one of its truths, unshaken out of any one attachment to the world, and an utter stranger to those high resolves, and the power of those great and animating prospects, which shed a glory over the daily walk of a believer, and give to every one of his doings the high character of a candidate for eternity.

We are quite aware of the doubts which this is calculated to excite in the mind of the hearer,—nor is it possible within the compass of an hour to stop and satisfy them all; or to come to a timely conclusion, without leaving a number of unresolved questions behind us.

There is one, however, which we cannot pass without observation. Does not this doctrine of a revelation of the Spirit, it may be asked, additional to the revelation of the word, open a door to the most unbridled variety? May it not give a sanction to any conceptions of any visionary pretenders, and clothe in all the authority of inspiration a set of doctrines not to be found within the compass of the written record? Does it not set

aside the usefulness of the Bible, and break in upon the unity and consistency of revealed truth, by letting loose upon the world a succession of fancies, as endless and as variable as are the caprices of the human imagination? All very true, did we ever pretend that the office of the Spirit was to reveal any thing additional to the information, whether in the way of doctrine or of duty, which the Bible sets before us. But his office, as defined by the Bible itself, is not to make known to us any truths which are not contained in the Bible; but to make clear to our understandings the truths which are contained in it. He opens our understandings to understand the Scriptures. The word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. It is the instrument by which the Spirit worketh. He does not tell us any thing that is out of the record; but all that is within it he sends home, with clearness and effect, upon the mind. He does not make us wise above that which is written; but he makes us wise, up to that which is written. When a telescope is directed to some distant landscape, it enables us to see what we could not otherwise have seen; but it does not enable us to see any thing which has not a real existence in the prospect before us. It does not present to the eye any delusive imagery,—neither is that a fanciful and fictitious scene which it throws open to our contemplation. The natural eye saw nothing but blue land stretching along the distant horizon. By the aid of the glass, there bursts upon it a charming variety of fields, and woods, and spires, and villages. Yet who would say that the glass added one feature to this assemblage? It discovers nothing to us which is not there; nor, out of that portion of the book of nature which we are employed in contemplating, does it bring into view a single character which is not really and previously inscribed upon it. And so of the Spirit. He does not add a single truth, or a single character, to the book of revelation. He enables the spiritual man to see what the natural man cannot see; but the spectacle which he lays open is uniform and immutable. It is the word of God which is ever the same;—and he, whom the Spirit of God has enabled to look to the Bible with a clear and affecting discernment, sees no phantom passing before him; but, amid all the visionary extrava-

gance with which he is charged, can, for every one article of his faith, and every one duty of his practice, make his triumphant appeal to the law and to the testimony.

We trust that this may be made clear by one example. We have not to travel out of the record for the purpose of having this truth made known to us,—that God is every where present. It meets the observation of the natural man in his reading of the Bible; and he understands, or thinks he understands, the terms in which it is delivered; and he can speak of it with consistency; and he ranks it with the other attributes of God; and he gives it an avowed and formal admission among the articles of his creed; and yet, with all this parade of light and knowledge, he, upon the subject of all-seeing and the ever-present Deity, labours under all the obstinacy of an habitual blindness. Carry him abroad, and you will find that the light which beams upon his senses, from the object of sight, completely overpowers that light which ought to beam upon his spirit, from this object of faith. He may occasionally think of it as he does of other things; but for every one practical purpose the thought abandons him, so soon as he goes into the next company, or takes a part in the next worldly concern, which, in the course of his business, comes round to him. It completely disappears as an element of conduct, and he talks, and thinks, and reasons just as he would have done, had his mind, in reference to God, been in a state of entire darkness. If any thing like a right conception of the matter ever exist in his heart, the din and the day light of the world drive it all away from him. Now, to rectify this case, it is surely not necessary, that the Spirit add any thing to the truth of God's omnipresence, as it is put down in the written record. It will be enough, that he gives to the mind upon which he operates, a steady and enduring impression of this truth. Now, this is one part of his office, and accordingly it is said of the unction of the Spirit, that it is an unction which remaineth. Neither is it necessary that the light, which he communicates, should consist in any vision which he gives to the eye, or in any bright impression upon the fancy, of any one thing not to be found within the pages of the Bible. It will be enough if he give a clear and vigorous appre

hension of the truth, just as it is written, to the understanding. Though the Spirit should do no more than give vivacity and effect to the truth of the constancy of God's presence, just as it stands in the written record—this will be quite enough to make the man who is under its influence carry and habitual sense of God about with him, think of him in the shop and in the market-place, walk with him all the day long, and feel the same moral restraint upon his doings, as if some visible superior, whose virtues he revered, and whose approbation he longed after, haunted his every footstep, and kept an attentive eye fastened upon the whole course of his history. The natural man may have sense, and he may have sagacity, and a readiness withal to admit the constancy of God's presence, as an undeniable doctrine of the Bible. But to the power of this truth he is dead; and it is only to the power of this world's interests and pleasures that he is alive. The spiritual man is the reverse of all this, and that without carrying his conceptions a single hair breadth beyond the communications of the written message. He makes no pretensions to wisdom by one jot or one tittle beyond the testimony of Scripture, and yet, after all, he lives under a revelation to which the other is a stranger. It does not carry him by a single footstep without the field of the written revelation, but it throws a radiance over every object within it. It furnishes him with a constant light which enables him to withstand the domineering influence of sight and of sense. He dies unto the world, he lives unto God,—and the reason is, that there rests upon him a peculiar manifestation, by which the truth is made visible to the eye of his mind, and a peculiar energy, by which it comes home upon his conscience. And if you come to inquire into the cause of this speciality, it is the language of the Bible, confirmed, as we believe it to be, by the soundest experience, that every power which nature has conferred upon man, exalted to its highest measure, and called forth to its most strenuous exercise is not able to accomplish it,—that it is due to a power above nature, and beyond it; that it is due to what the Apostle calls the demonstration of the Spirit,—a demonstration withheld from the self-sufficient exertions of man, and given to his believing prayers.

And here we are reminded of an instructive passage in the

life of one of our earliest and most eminent reformers. When the light of divine truth broke in upon his heart, it was so new and so delightful to one formerly darkened by the errors of popery,—he saw such a power and such an evidence along with it, —he was so ravished by its beauties, and so carried along by ts resistless arguments, that he felt as if he had nothing to do, but to brandish those mighty weapons, that he might gain all hearts and carry every thing before him. But he did not calculate on the stubborn resistance of corrupt human nature, to him and to his reasonings. He preached, and he argued, and he put forth all his powers of eloquence amongst them. But mortified that so many hearts remained hardened, that so many hearers resisted him, that the doors of so many hearts were kept shut in spite of all loud and repeated warnings, that so many souls remained unsubdued, and dead in trespasses and sins, he was heard to exclaim that old Adam, was too strong for young Melancthon.

There is the malignity of the fall which adheres to us. There is a power of corruption and of blindness along with it, which it is beyond the compass of human means to overthrow. There is a dark and settled depravity in the human character, which maintains its gloomy and obstinate resistance to all our warnings and all our arguments. There is a spirit working in the children of disobedience which no power of human eloquence can lay. There is a covering of thick darkness upon the face of all people, a mighty influence abroad upon the world, with which the Prince of the power of the air keeps his thousands and his tens of thousands under him. The minister who enters into this field of conflict may have zeal, and talents, and eloquence. His heart may be smitten with the love of the truth, and his mind be fully fraught with its arguments. Thus armed, he may come forth among his people, flushed with the mighty enterprise of turning souls from the dominion of Satan unto God. In all the hope of victory he may discharge the weapons of his warfare among them. Week afer week, he may reason with them out of the Scriptures. Sabbath after Sabbath he may declaim, he may demonstrate, he may put forth every expedient, he may at one time set in array before them the ter-

rors of the law, at another he may try to win them by the free offer of the Gospel; and, in the proud confidence of success, he may think that nothing can withstand him, and that the heart of every hearer must give way before the ardour of his zeal and the power of his invincible arguments. Yes; they may admire him, and they may follow him, but the question we have to ask is, will they be converted by him? They may even go so far as to allow that it is all very true he says. He may be their favourite preacher, and when he opens his exhortations upon them, there may be a deep and a solemn attention in every countenance. But how is the heart coming on all the while? How do these people live, and what evidence are they giving of being born again under the power of his ministry? It is not enough to be told of those momentary convictions which flash from the pulpit, and carry a thrilling influence along with them through the hearts of listening admirers. Have these hearers of the word, become the doers of the word? Have they sunk down into the character of humble, and sanctified, and penitent, and pains-taking Christians? Where, where, is the fruit? And while the preaching of Christ is all their joy, has the will of Christ become all their directions? Alas, he may look around him, and at the end of the year, after all the tumults of a sounding popularity, he may find the great bulk of them just where they were,—as listless and unconcerned about the things of eternity,—as obstinately alienated from God,—as firmly devoted to selfish and transitory interests,—as exclusively set upon the farm, and the money, and the merchandize,—and, with the covering of many external decencies, to make them as fair and plausible as their neighbours around them, proving by a heart given, with the whole tide of its affections, to the vanities of the world, that they have their full share of the wickedness which abounds in it. After all his sermons, and all his loud and passionate addresses, he finds that the power of darkness still keeps its ground among them. He is grieved to learn that all he has said, has had no more effect, than the foolish and the feeble lispings of infancy. He is overwhelmed by a sense of his own helplessness, and the lesson is a wholesome one. It makes him feel that the sufficiency is not in

him, but in God; it makes him understand that another power must be brought to bear upon the mass of resistance which is before him; and let the man of confident and aspiring genius, who thought he was to assail the dark seats of human corruption, and to carry them by storm, let him be reduced in mortified and dependent humbleness to the expedient of the Apostle, let him crave the intercessions of his people, and throw himself upon their prayers.

Let us now bring the whole matter to a practical conclusion. For the acquirement of a saving and spiritual knowledge of the gospel, you are on the one hand, to put forth all your ordinary powers, in the very same way that you do for the acquirement of knowledge in any of the ordinary branches of human learning. But in the act of doing so, you, on the other hand, are to proceed on a profound impression of the utter fruitlessness of all your endeavours, unless God meet them by the manifestations of his Spirit. In other words, you are to read your Bible, and to bring your faculties of attention, and understanding, and memory, to the exercise, just as strenuously as if these and these alone could conduct you to the light after which you are aspiring. But you are at the same time to pray as earnestly for this object, as if God accomplished it without your exertions at all, instead of accomplishing it in the way he actually does, by your exertions. It is when your eyes are turned toward the book of God's testimony, and not when your eyes are turned away from it, that he fulfils upon you the petition of the Psalmist,—"Lord do thou open mine eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things contained in thy law." You are not to exercise your faculties in searching after truth without prayer, else God will withhold from you his illuminating influences. And you are not to pray for truth, without exercising your faculties, else God will reject your prayers, as the mockery of a hypocrite. But you are to do both, and this is in harmony with the whole style of a Christian's obedience, who is as strenuous in doing as if his doings were to accomplish all, and as fervent in prayer, as if without the inspiring energy of God, all his doings were vanity and feebleness. And the great Apostle may be quoted as the best example of this observation.

There never existed a man more active than Paul, in the work of the Christian ministry. How great the weight and the variety of his labours! What preaching, what travelling what writing of letters, what daily struggling with difficulties, what constant exercise of thought in watching over the Churches, what a world of perplexity in his dealings with men, and in the hard dealings of men with him; and were they friends, or were they enemies, how his mind behooved to be ever on the alert, in counselling the one and in warding off the hostility of the other. Look to all that is visible in the life of this Apostle, and you see nothing but bustle, and enterprise, and variety. You see a man intent on the furtherance of some great object, and in the prosecution of it, as ever diligent, and as ever doing, as if the whole burden of it lay upon himself, or as if it were reserved for the strength of his solitary arm to accomplish it. To this object he consecrated every moment of his time, and even when he set him down to the work of a tent-maker, for the sake of vindicating the purity of his intentions, and holding forth an example of honest independence to the poorer brethren; even here, you just see another display of the one principle which possessed his whole heart, and gave such a character of wondrous activity to all the days of his earthly pilgrimage. There are some, who are so far misled by a kind of perverse theology which they have adopted, as to hesitate about the lawfulness of being diligent and doing in the use of means. While they are slumbering over their speculation, and proving how honestly they put faith in it by doing nothing, let us be guided by the example of the painstaking and industrious Paul, and remember, that never since the days of this Apostle, who calls upon us to be followers of him, even as he was of Christ,—never were the labours of human exertion more faithfully rendered, —never were the workings of a human instrument put forth with greater energy.

But it forms a still more striking part of the example of Paul, that while he did as much toward the extension of the Christian faith, as if the whole success of the cause depended upon his doing,—he prayed as much, and as fervently for this object, as if all his doings were of no consequence. A fine testimony to

the supremacy of God, from the man, who, in labours was more abundant than any who ever come after him, that he counted all as nothing, unless God would interfere to put his blessings upon all, and to give his efficacy to all! He who looked so busy, and whose hand was so constantly engaged, in the work that was before him, looked for all his success to that help which cometh from the sanctuary of God. There was his eye directed. Thence alone did he expect a blessing upon his endeavours. He wrought, and that with diligence too, because God bade him; but he also prayed, and that with equal diligence, because God had revealed to him, that plant as he may, and water as he may, God alone giveth the increase. He did homage to the will of God, by the labours of the ever-working minister,—and he did homage to the power of God, by the devotions of the ever-praying minister. He did not say, what signifies my working, for God alone can work with effect? This is very true, but God chooses to work by instruments,—and Paul, by the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" expressed his readiness to be an instrument in his hand. Neither did he say, what signifies my praying, for I have got a work here to do, and it is enough that I be diligent in the performance of it. No—For the power of God must be acknowledged, and a sense of his power must mingle with all our performances; and therefore it is that the Apostle kept both working and praying, and with him they formed two distinct emanations of the same principle; and while there are many who make these Christian graces to neutralize each other, the judicious and the clear-sighted Paul, who had received the spirit of a sound mind, could give his unembarrassed vigour to both these exercises, and combine, in his own example, the utmost diligence in doing, with the utmost dependence on him who can alone give to that doing all its fruit and all its efficacy.

The union of these two graces has at times been finely exemplified in the latter, and uninspired ages of the Christian Church; and the case of the missionary Elliot is the first, and the most impressive that occurs to us. His labours, like those of the great Apostle, were directed to the extension of the vine-

yard of Christ,—and he was among the very first who put forth his hand to the breaking up the American wilderness. For this purpose did he set himself down to the acquirement of a harsh and barbarous language; and he became qualified to confer with savages; and he grappled for years with their untractable humours; and he collected these wanderers into villages; and while other reformers have ennobled their names by the formation of a new set of public laws, did he take upon him the far more arduous task of creating for his untamed Indians, a new set of domestic habits; and such was the power of his influence that he carried his christianizing system into the very bosom of their families; and he spread art, and learning, and civilization amongst them; and to his visible labours among his people he added the labours of the closet; and he translated the whole Bible into their tongue; and he set up a regular provision for the education of their children; and lest the spectator who saw his fourteen towns risen as by enchantment in the desert, and peopled by the rudest of his tribes, should ask in vain for the mighty power by which such wondrous things had been brought to pass,—this venerable priest left his testimony behind him; and neither overlooking the agency of God, nor the agency of man as the instrument of God, he tells us in one memorable sentence written by himself at the end of his Indian grammer, that "prayers and pains through faith in Christ Jesus can do any thing."

The last inference we shall draw from this topic, is the duty and importance of prayer among Christians, for the success of the ministry of the Gospel. Paul had a high sense of the efficacy of prayer. Not according to that refined view of it, which, making all its influence to consist in its improving and moralizing effect upon the mind, fritters down to nothing the plain import and significancy of this ordinance. With him it was a matter of asking and of receiving. And just as when in pursuit of some earthly benefit which is at the giving of another, you think yourselves surer of your object the more you multiply the number of askers and the number of applications—in this very way did he, if we may be allowed the expression, contrive to strengthen and extend his interest in the court of heaven. He

craved the intercessions of his people. There were many believers formed under his ministry, and each of these could bring the prayer of faith to bear upon the counsels of God, and bring down a larger portion of strength and of fitness to rest on the Apostle for making more believers. It was a kind of creative or accumulating process. After he had travelled in birth with his new converts till Christ was formed in them—this was the use he put them to. It is an expedient which harmonizes with the methods of Providence and the will of God, who orders intercessions, and on the very principle too, that he willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The intercession of christians, who are already formed, is the leaven which is to leaven the whole earth with Christianity, It is one of the destined instruments in the hand of God for hastening the glory of the latter days. Take the world at large, and the doctrine of intercession, as an engine of mighty power, is derided as one of the reveries of fanaticism. This is a subject on which the men of the world are in a deep slumber; but there are watchmen who never hold their peace day nor night, and to them God addresses these remarkable words, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

SERMON II.

THE MYSTERIOUS ASPECT OF THE GOSPEL TO THE MEN OF THE WORLD.

EZEKIEL XX. 49.

"Then said I, Ah, Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?"

In parables, the lesson that is meant to be conveyed is to a certain degree shaded in obscurity. They are associated by the Psalmist with dark sayings—"I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old." We read in the New Testament of a parable leaving all the effect of an unexplained mystery upon the understanding of the general audience to which it was addressed; and the explanation of the parable given to a special few was to them the clearing up of a mystery. "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but to them it is not given!"

The prophets of old were often commissioned to address their countrymen under the guise of symbolical language. This threw a veil over the meaning of their communications; and though it was a veil of such transparency as could be seen through by those who looked earnestly and attentively, and with a humble desire to be taught in the will of God,—yet there was dimness enough to intercept all the moral, and all the significancy, from the minds of those who wanted principle to be in earnest; or who wanted patience for the exercise of attention; or who wanted such a concern about God, as either to care very much for his will, or to feel that any thing which respected him was worth the trouble of a very serious investigation.

They who wanted this concern and this principle, from them was taken away even that which they had. God at length ceased from his messages, and the Spirit of God ceased from his warnings. They who had the preparation of all this docility to them more was given. Their honest desire after knowledge, was rewarded by the acquirement of it. They continued to look, and to enquire, and at length they were illuminated; and thus was fulfilled the saying of the Saviour, that "whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly, —but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

It is not difficult to conceive how the obscure intimations of Ezekiel would be taken by the careless and ungodly men of his generation. It is likely that even from the naked denunciations of vengeance they would have turned contemptuously away. And it is still more likely that they would refuse the impression of them, when offered to their notice, under a figurative disguise. It is not at all to be supposed that they would put forth any activity of mind in quest of that which they nauseated, and of that which, if ever they had found, they would have found to be utterly revolting to all their habits of impiety. They are the very last men we should expect to meet with at the work of a pains-taking search after the interpretation of these parables. Nay, they would gladly fasten upon the obscurity of them both as a circumstance of reproach against the prophet, and as an apology for their own indifference. And thus it is, that to be a teacher of parables might at length become a scoff and a by-word; and the prophet seems to have felt the force of it as an opprobrious designation, seems to be looking forward to the mixture of disdain and impatience with which he would be listened to, when God charged him with an allegorical communication to his countrymen, and he answered, "Ah, Lord God! they say of me, Doth he yet speak parables?"

Now the question we have to put is—Is there no similar plea of resistance ever preferred against the faithful messengers of God in the present day? It is true, that in our time there is no such thing as a man coming amongst you, charged with the utterance of a direct and personal inspiration. But it is the bu-

siness of every minister truly to expound the record of inspiration; and is it not very possible that in so doing he may be reproached, not for preaching parabolically, but for preaching mysteriously? Have you never heard of a sermon being called mystical; and what shall we think of it, if, in point of fact, this imputation falls most readily and most abundantly on the sermon that is most pervaded by the spirit, and most overrun with the phraseology of the New Testament? In that composition there are certain terms which recur incessantly, and which would therefore appear to represent certain very leading and prominent ideas. Now, whether are these ideas clearly and promptly suggested to your mind, by the utterance of terms? What are the general character and effect which in your eye is imparted to a sermon, when, throughout the whole of it, the words of the apostolic vocabulary are ever and anon obtruded upon your hearing—and the whole stress of the argument is made to lie on such matters as sanctification; and the atonement; and the blood of the everlasting covenant; and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, who takes up his habitation in the soul of the believer; and salvation by grace; and the spirit of adoption poured forth on the heart, and filling it with all the peace and joy of a confident reconciliation; and the exercise of fellowship with the Father, and the Son; and the process of growing up unto Christ; and the habit of receiving out of his fulness, and of beholding with open face his glory, so as to be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. We are not at present asking, if you feel the disgust with which unsubdued nature ever listens to these representations or in what degree they are offensive to your taste, and painfully uncongenial with the whole style and habit of your literature. But we ask, if such terms and such phrases as have now been specified, do not spread before the eye of your mind an aspect of exceeding dimness over the preacher's demonstration? Does he not appear to you as if he wrapped himself up in the obscurity of a technical language, which you are utterly at a loss to comprehend? When the sermon in question is put by the side of some lesson of obvious morality, or some exposition of those principles which are recog-

nized and acted upon in ordinary life, does it not look to you as if it was shrouded from common observation altogether; and that ere you could be initiated into the mystery of such language and of such doctrine, you would need to describe a mighty and still untrodden interval from all your present habits of conception? And yet, what if it be indeed the very language and the very doctrine of the New Testament?—if all the jargon that is charged on the interpretation of the word be the actual word itself?—and if the preacher be faithfully conveying the message of the Bible, at the very time that the hearer is shielding himself from the impression of it by the saying, that he preacheth mysteries?

But to keep the two parties at a still more hopeless distance from each other,—the message of such a preacher, incomprehensible as many of its terms and many of its particulars may be, evidently bears a something upon it that is fitted to alarm the fears, and utterly to thwart the strongest tendencies of nature. Let him be just a faithful expounder of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and let the blindness of the natural man be what it may, still there is scarcely a hearer who can fail to perceive, that, anterior to the reception of this Gospel, the preacher looks upon him as the enemy of God,—and strongly points at such a controversy between him and his Maker, as can only be made up through an appointed Mediator—and requires of him such a faith as will transform his character, and as will shift the whole currency of his affections and desires—and affirms the necessity of such a regeneration, as that all old things shall be done away, and all things shall become new;—and lets him know, that to be a Christian indeed he must die unto sense, he must be crucified unto the world, and, renouncing its charms and its predilections, must learn to have his conversation in heaven, and to choose God as the strength of his heart and his portion for evermore. All this flashes plainly and significantly enough, through that veil of mysticism which appears to overspread the general doctrine of the preacher; and imparts a forbidding character to it in the eyes of those to whom we are alluding; and they will be glad of any pertence to shun a painful and a revolting contemplation; and they will complain of him on the

very ground on which the Jews of old complained of Ezekiel, as a dealer in parables—and while much of their antipathy is founded upon his being so strict and so spiritual, and so unaccommodating to the general tone of society, one of the charges which will be most frequently and most loudly preferred against him, is that he is so very mysterious.

In the prosecution of the following discourse, we shall endeavour in the first place to state shortly the ground on which the religion of the New Testament looks so mysterious a thing to the men of the world, and then conclude with a short practical remonstrance upon this subject.

I. There are certain experiences of human life so oft repeated, and so familiar to all our recollections, that when we perceive, or think we perceive, an analogy between them and the matters of religion, then religion does not appear to us to be mysterious. There is not a more familiar exhibition in society than that of a servant who performs his allotted work, and who obtains his stipulated reward—and we are all servants, and one is our master, even God.

There is nothing more common than that a son should acquit himself to the satisfaction of his parents,—and we are all the children of an universal parent, whom it is our part to please in all things. Even when that son falls under displeasure, and is either visited with compunction or made to receive the chastisement of his disobedience, there is nothing more common than to witness the relentings of an earthly father, and the readiness with which forgiveness is awarded on the repentance and sorrow of the offender,—and we, in like manner, liable to err from the pure law of heaven, have surely a kind and indulgent Father to deal with. And, lastly, there is nothing more common than that the loyalty of a zealous and patriotic subject should be rewarded by the patronage, or at least by the protection of the civil magistrate,—and that an act of transgression against the laws should be visited by an act of vengeance on the part of him who is a terror to evil doers, while a praise to such as do well. And thus it is too, that we are under a lawgiver in heaven who is able both to save and to destroy. Now so long

as the work of religious instruction can be upheld by such analogies as these,—so long as the relations of civil or of domestic society can be employed to illustrate the relation between God and the creatures whom he has formed,—so long as the recollections of daily experience can thus be applied to the method of the divine administration,—a vein of perspicuity will appear to run through the clear and rational exposition of him who has put all the mist and all the technicals of an obscure theology away from him. All his lessons will run in an easy and direct train. Nor do we see how it is possible to be bewildered amongst such explanations, as are suggested by the most ordinary doings and concerns of human society;—and did the preacher only confine himself to such doctrine, as that God rewards the upright, and punishes the rebellious, and upon the impulse of that compassion which belongs to him, takes again the penitent into acceptance, and in the great day of renumeration, will give unto every man according to his works,—did he only confine himself to truths so palpable, and build upon it applications so obvious, as just to urge us to the performance of duty by the promised reward, and deter us from the infraction of it by the severities of the threatened punishment, and call us to reformation by affectionately pleading with us the mercies of God, and warn us with all his force and all his fidelity, that should we persist in obstinate impenitence we shall be cut off from happiness forever,—there might be something to terrify, —but there would at least be nothing to darken or to perplex us in these interpretations—nothing that would not meet common intelligence, and be helped forward by all the analogies of common observation,—and should this therefore prove the great burden of the preacher's demonstration, we should be the last to reproach him, as a dealer in parables, or as a dealer in mysteries.

To attach us the more to this rational style of preaching, we cannot but perceive that it obtains a kind of experimental countenance from the actual distinctions of character which are realized in the peopled world around us. Can any thing be more evident than that there is a line of separation between the sensual and the temperate, between the selfish and the disinterest-

ed, between the sordid and the honourable; or if you require a distinction more strictly religious, between the profane and the decent keeper of all the ordinances? Do not the former do, what, in the matter of it, is contrary to the law of God, and the latter do, what, in the matter, of it, is agreeable to that law? Here then at once we witness the two grand divisions of human society, in a state of real and visible exemplification—and what more is necessary than just to employ the most direct and intelligible motives of conduct, for persuading men to withdraw from one of these divisions, and pass over to the other of them? Surely it is just as we occupy the higher and the lower places in the scale of character, that we shall be found on the right and on the left hand of the judge on the day of reckoning: And what more obvious way then of preparing a people for eternity —than just to point our urgency to the one object of prevailing upon men to cross the line of separation, to cease from the iniquities which abound on the one side of it, and to put on the reformations which are practised on the other side of it? For this purpose, what else is to be done than plainly to tell the whole amount of the interest and obligation which lies on the side of virtue, and as plainly to tell of the ruin and the degradation both of character and of prospect which lie on the side of vice,—to press the accomplishments of a good life on the one hand, and to denounce the falsehoods and the dishonesties, and the profligacies of a bad life on the other,—in a word, to make our hearers the good subjects of God, much in the same way, as you would propose to make them the good servants of their master or the good subjects of their government; and thus by the simple and direct enforcements of duty, to shun all the difficulties of a scholastic theology, and to keep clear of all its mysteriousness.

It is needless to say how much this process is reversed by many a teacher of Christianity. It is true that they hold out most prominently the need of some great transition—but it is a transition most mysteriously different from the act of crossing that line of separation, to which we have just been adverting. Without referring at all in fact to any such line, do they come forth from the very outset with one sweeping denun-

ciation of worthlessness and guilt which they carry round among all the varieties of character, and by which they affirm every individual of the human race, to be an undone sinner in the sight of God. Instead of bidding him look to other sinners less deformed by blemishes, and more rich in moral accomplishments, than himself, and then attempt to recover his distance from the divine favour by the imitation of them, they bid him think of the awful amount of debt and of deficiency that lies between the lawgiver in heaven, and a whole world guilty before him. They speak of a depravity so entire, and of an alienation from God so deep, and so universal, as positively to obliterate that line of separation which is supposed to mark off those, who, upon the degree of their obedience, are rightful claimants to the honours of eternity, from those, who, upon the degree of their disobedience, are wretched outcasts of condemnation. They reduce the men of all casts and of all characters, to the same footing of worthlessness in the sight of God; and speak of the evil of the human heart in such terms, as will sound to many a mysterious exaggeration, and, like the hearers of Ezekiel, will these not be able to comprehend the argument of the preacher, when he tells them, though in the very language of the Bible, that they are the heirs of wrath; that none of them is righteous, no not one; that all flesh have corrupted their ways, and have fallen short of the glory of God; that the world at large is a lost and a fallen world, and that the natural inheritance of all who live in it, is the inheritance of a temporal death, and a ruined eternity.

When the preacher goes on in this strain, those hearers whom the Spirit has not convinced of sin will be utterly at a loss to understand him,—nor are we to wonder, if he seem to speak to them in a parable, when he speaks of the disease,—that all the darkness of a parable should still seem to hang over his demonstrations, when, as a faithful expounder of the revealed will and counsel of God, he proceeds to tell them of the remedy. For God hath not only made known the fearful magnitude of his reckoning against us, but he has prescribed, and with that authority which only belongs to him, the way of its settlement; and that he has told us all the works and all the efforts of unrenew-

ed nature are of no avail, in gaining us acceptance, and that he has laid the burden of our atonement on him who alone was able to bear it; and he not only invites, but he commands, and he beseeches us to enter into peace and pardon on the footing of that expiation which Christ hath made, and of that righteousness which Christ hath wrought out for us; and he further declares, that we have come into the world with such a moral constitution, as will not merely need to be repaired, but as will need to be changed or made over again, ere we be meet for the inheritance of the saints; and still for this object does he point our eyes to the great Mediator who has undertaken, not merely for the forgiveness, but who has undertaken for the sanctification of all who put their trust in him; and he announces that out of his fulness there ever come forth supplies of strength for the new obedience of new creatures in Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, it is when the preacher is unfolding this scheme of salvation,—it is when he is practically applying it to the conscience and the conduct of his hearers,—it is when the terms of grace, and faith, and sanctification, are pressed into frequent employment for the work of these very peculiar explanations,—it is, when instead of illustrating his subject by those analogies of common life which might have done for men of an untainted nature, but which will not do for the men of this corrupt world, he faithfully unfolds that economy of redemption which God hath actually set up for the recovery of our degenerate species,—it is then, that to a hearer still in darkness, the whole argument sounds as strangely and as obscurely, as if it were conveyed to him in an unknown language,—it is then, that the repulsion of his nature to the truth as it is in Jesus, finds a willing excuse in the utter mysteriousness of its articles, and its terms; and gladly does he put away from him the unwelcome message, with the remark, that he who delivers it, is a speaker of parables, and there is no comprehending him.

It will readily occur as an observation upon all that has been delivered, that by the great majority of hearers, this imputation of mysteriousness is never preferred,—that in fact, they are most habituated to this style of preaching,—and that they recognise the very thing which they value most, and are best acquainted

with, when they hear a sermon replete with the doctrine, and abounding in the terms, and uttered in the cadence of orthodoxy. Of this we are perfectly aware. The point to carry with the great bulk of hearers is, not to conquer their disgust at the form of sound words, but to conquer their resistance to the power of them; to alarm them by the consideration, that the influence of the lesson is altogether a distinct matter from the pleasantness of the song,—that their ready and delighted acquiescence in the preaching of the faith, may consist with a total want of obedience to the faith,—and that with all the love they bear to the phraseology of the gospel, and all their preference for its ministers, and all their attendance upon its sacraments, the kingdom of God, however much it may have come to them in word, may not at all have come to them in power. This is a distinct error from the one we have been combating, —a weed which grows abundantly in an other quarter of the field altogether,—a perverseness of mind, more deceitful than the other, and perhaps still more unmanageable, and against which, the faithful minister has to set himself amongst that numerous class of professors, who like to hear of the faith, but never apply a single practical test to the question, Am I in the faith? who like to hear of regeneration, but never put the question, Am I really regenerated? who like to hear that without Christ they can do nothing, but may be enabled to do all things through him strengthening them, but never enter into the important personal inquiry, Is he really strengthening me, and am I, by my actual victory over the world, and my actual progress in the accomplishments of personal Christianity, bearing evidence upon myself that I have a real part and interest in these things?

There can be no doubt as to the existence of such a class,— and under another text, there could be no difficulty in finding out a spiritual application, by which to reach and to reprove them. But the matter suggested by the present text is, that if a minister of the present day should preach as the Apostles did before him,—if the great theme of his ministrations be Jesus Christ, and him crucified,—if the doctrine of the sermon be a faithful transcript of the doctrine of the New Testament,—

there is one class, we have every warrant for believing, from whom the word will not return unto him void,—and there is another class who will be the willing hearers, but not the obedient doers of the word: but there is still a third class, made up of men of cultivated literature, and men of polished and respectable society, and men of a firm secular intelligence in all the ordinary matters of business, who, at the same time, possessing no sympathies whatever with the true spirit and design of Christianity, are exceedingly shut up, in all the avenues both of their heart and understanding, against the peculiar teaching of the gospel. Like the hearers of Ezekiel, they feel an impression of mysteriousness. There is a certain want of adjustment between the truth as it is in Jesus, and the prevailing style of their conceptions. All their views of human life, and all the lessons they may have gathered from the school of civil or classical morality, and all their preferences for what they count the clearness and the rationality of legal preaching, and all the predilections they have gotten in its favour, from the most familiar analogies in human society,—all these, coupled with their utter blindness to the magnitude of that guilt which they have incurred under the judgment of a spiritual law, enter as so many elements of dislike in their hearts, towards the whole tone and character of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. And they go to envelop the subject in such a shroud of mysticism to their eyes, that many of the preachers of the gospel are, by them, resisted on the same plea with the prophet of old, to whom his contemptuous countrymen meant to attach the ridicule and the ignominy of a proverb, when they said,—he is a dealer in parables.

We mistake the matter, if we think that the offence of the cross has yet ceased from the land. We mistake it, if we think that the persecution of contempt, a species of persecution more appalling to some minds than even direct and personal violence, is not still the appointed trial of all who would live godly, and of all who would expound zealously and honestly the doctrine of Christ Jesus our Lord. We utterly mistake it, if we think that Christianity is not even to this very hour the same very peculiar thing that it was in the days of the Apos-

tles,—that it does not as much signalize and separate us from a world lying in wickedness,—that the reproach cast upon Paul, that he was mad, because he was an intrepid follower of Christ, is not still ready to be preferred against every faithful teacher, and every consistent disciple of the faith,—and that, under the terms of methodism, and fanaticism, and mysticism, there is not ready to be discharged upon them from the thousand batteries of a hostile and unbelieving world, as abundant a shower of invective and contumely as in the first ages.

II. Now, if there be any hearers present who feel that we have spoken to them, when we spoke of the resistance which is held out against peculiar Christianity, on the ground of that mysteriousness in which it appears to be concealed from all ordinary dicernment,—we should like to take our leave of them at present with two observations. We ask them, in the first place, if they have ever, to the satisfaction of their own minds, disproved the Bible,—and if not, we ask them how they can sit at ease, should all the mysteriousness which they charge upon Evangelical truth, and by which they would attempt to justify their contempt for it, shall be found to attach to the very language, and to the very doctrine of God's own communication? What if it be indeed the truth of God? What if it be the very language of the offended lawgiver? What if they be the only overtures of reconciliation, upon the acceptance of which a sinner can come nigh unto him? Now he actually does say that no man cometh unto the Father but by the Son,—and that his is the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved,—and that he will be magnified only in the appointed Mediator,—and that Christ is all in all,—and that there is no other foundation on which man can lay, and that he who believeth on him shall not be confounded.

He further speaks of our personal preparation for heaven—and here, too, may his utterance sound mysteriously in your hearing, as he tells that without holiness no man can see God,—and that we are without strength while we are without the Spirit to make us holy—and that unless a man be born again he shall not enter into the kingdom of God,—and that he should wrestle

in prayer for the washing of regeneration,—and that he should watch for the Holy Ghost with all perseverance,—and that he should aspire at being perfect through Christ strengthening him —and that he should, under the operation of those great provisions which are set up in the New Testament for creating us anew unto good works, conform himself unto that doctrine of grace by which he is brought to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world. We again ask them, if all this be offensive to their taste, and utterly revolting to their habits and inclinations, and if they turn with disgust from the bitterness of such an application, and can behold no strength to constrain them in any such arguments, and no eloquence to admire in them. With what discernment truly is your case taken up in this very Bible, whose phraseology and whose doctrine are so unpalatable to you, when it tells us of the preaching of the cross being foolishness,—but remember that it says it is foolishness to those who perish: when it tells of the natural man not receiving of the things of the Spirit,—but remember that it says, if ye have not the Spirit of God, ye are none of his; when it tells of the gospel being hid,—but hid to them who are lost: "In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of those which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Secondly, let us assure the men, who at this moment bid the stoutest defiance to the message of the gospel—the men whose natural taste appears to offer an invincible barrier against the reception of its truths, the men who, upon the plea of mysteriousness, or the plea of fanaticism, or the plea of excessive and unintelligible peculiarity, are most ready to repudiate the whole style and doctrine of the New Testament,—let us assure them that the time may yet come, when they shall render to this very gospel the most striking of all acknowledgments, even by sending to the door of its most faithful ministers, and humbly craving from them their explanations and their prayers. It indeed offers an affecting contrast to all the glory of earthly prospects, and to all the vigour of confident and rejoicing health, and to all the activity and enterprize of business, when the man who made

the world his theatre, and felt his mountain to stand strong on the fleeting foundation of its enjoyments and its concerns,—when he comes to be bowed down with infirmity, or receives from the trouble within, the solemn intimation that death is now looking to him in good earnest: When such a man takes him to the bed of sickness, and he knows it to be a sickness unto death,—when, under all the weight of breathlessness and pain, he listens to the man of God, as he points the way that leadeth to eternity,—what, I would ask, is the kind of gospel that is most fitted to charm the sense of guilt and the anticipations of vengeance away from him? Sure we are, that we never in these affecting circumstances—through which you have all to pass—we never saw the man who could maintain a stability, and a hope, from the sense of his own righteousness; but who, if leaning on the righteousness of Christ, could mix a peace and an elevation with his severest agonies. We never saw the expiring mortal who could look with an undaunted eye on God as his lawgiver; but often has all its languor been lighted up with joy at the name of Christ as his Saviour. We never saw the dying acquaintance, who upon the retrospect of his virtues and of his doings, could prop the tranquillity of his spirit on the expectation of a legal reward. O no! this is not the element which sustains the tranquillity of death beds. It is the hope of forgiveness. It is a believing sense of the efficacy of the atonement. It is the prayer of faith, offered up in the name of him who is the Captain of all our salvation. It is a dependence on that power which can alone impart a meetness for the inheritance of the saints, and present the spirit holy, and unreprovable, and unblameable, in the sight of God.

Now, what we have to urge is, that if these be the topics, which, on the last half hour of your life, are the only ones that will possess, in your judgment, any value or substantial importance, why put them away from you now? You will recur to them then, and for what? that you may get the forgiveness of your sins. But there is a something else you must get, ere you can obtain an entrance into peace or glory. You must get the renovation of that nature, which is so deeply tainted at this moment with the guilt of ingratitude and forgetfulness towards

God. This must be gone through ere you die; and say if a change so mighty should be wantonly postponed to the hour of dying?—when all your refusals of the gospel have hardened and darkened the mind against it; when a demonstration of the Spirit then, is surely not to be counted on, as the return that you will experience for resisting all his intimations now; when the effects of the alienation of a whole life, both in extinguishing the light of your conscience, and in riveting your distaste for holiness, will be accumulated into such a barrier in the way of your return to God, as stamps upon death-bed conversions, a grievous unlikelihood, and should give an imperious force to the call of "To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, seeing that now is your accepted time, and now is your day of salvation."

SERMON III.

THE PREPARATION NECESSARY FOR UNDERSTANDING THE MYSTERIES OF THE GOSPEL.

MATTHEW xiii. 11, 12.

"He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that he hath."

It is of importance to mark the principle of distribution on which it is given to some to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and it is not given to others. Both may at the outset be equally destitute of a clear understanding of these mysteries. But the former may have what the latter have not. With the former there may be a desire for explanation; with the latter there may be no such desire. The former may, in the earnest prosecution of this desire, be praying earnestly, and reading diligently, and striving laboriously, to do all that they know to be the will of God. With the latter, there may be neither the habit of prayer, nor the habit of inquiry, nor the habit of obedience. To the one class will be given what they have not. From the other class what they have shall be taken away. We have already attempted to excite in the latter class a respectful attention to the truths of the gospel, and shall now confine ourselves chiefly to the object of encouraging and directing those who feel the mysteriousness of these truths, and long for light to arise in the midst of it;—shall address ourselves to those who have an honest anxiety after that truth, which is unto salvation, but find the way to it beset with many

doubts and many perplexities,—to those who are impressed with a general conviction on the side of Scripture, but in whose eyes a darkness impenetrable still broods over its pages,—to those who are haunted by a sense of the imperious necessity of religion, and at the same time cannot escape from the impression, that if it is any where to be found, it is to be found within the records of the Old and New Testament, but from whose heart in the reading of these records the veil still remains untaken away.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, let us attempt, in the first place, to explain what it is that we ought to have, in order to attain an understanding of the mysteries of the gospel; and, in the second place, how it is that in many cases these mysteries are evolved upon the mind in a clear and convincing manifestation.

I. First, then, we ought to have an honest desire after light, and if we have this desire, it will not remain unproductive. There is a connexion repeatedly announced to us in Scripture between desire upon this subject, and its accomplishment. He that willeth to do the will of God shall know of my doctrine. He who hungereth and thirsteth shall be filled. He who lacketh wisdom and is desirous of obtaining it, let him vent his desire in prayer,—and if it be the prayer of confidence in God, his desire shall be given him. There are thousands to whom the Bible is a sealed book, and who are satisfied that it should remain so, who share in the impetuous contempt of the Pharisees against a doctrine to which they are altogether blind, who have no understanding of the matter, and no wish that it should be otherwise,—and unto them it will not be given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They have not, and from them therefore shall be taken away even that which they have. There are others, again, who have an ardent and unquenchable thirst after the mysteries of the gospel; who, like the prophet in the apocalypse, weep much because the book is not opened to them; who complain of darkness, like the Apostles of old when they expostulated with their Teacher because he spoke in parables, and, like them, who go to him with their requests

for an explanation. These shall find that what they cannot do for themselves, the Lion of the tribe of Judah will do for them. He will prevail to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof. There is something they already have, even an honest wish to be illuminated, and to this more will be given. They are awake to the desirableness, they are awake to the necessity of a revelation, which they have not yet gotten,—and to them belongs the promise of, Awake, O sinner, and Christ shall give thee light.

Secondly, We ought to have a habit of prayer conjoined with a habit of inquiry; and to this more will be given. We have already adverted to the circumstance, that it is in the Bible, and not out of the Bible, where this light is to be met with. It is by the Spirit of God, shining upon the word of God, that his truth is reflected with clearness upon the soul. It is by his operation that the characters of this book are made to stand as visibly out to the eye of the understanding, as they do to the eye of the body; and therefore it is evident that it is not in the act of looking away from the written revelation, but in the act of looking towards it, that the wished-for illumination will at length come into the mind of an inquirer. Let your present condition then be that of a darkness as helpless and as unattainable as can possibly be imagined, there still remains an obvious and practicable direction which you can be doing with in the mean time. You can persevere in the exercise of reading your Bible. There you are at the place of meeting between the Spirit of God and your own spirit. You may have to wait, as if at the pool of Siloam; but the many calls of the Bible to wait upon God, to wait upon him with patience, to wait and to be of good courage, all prove that this waiting is a frequent and a familiar part of that process by which a sinner finds his way out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel.

And we have also adverted already, though in a very general way, to the difference in point of result between the active inquiries of a man who looks forward to the acquisition of saving truth as the natural and necessary termination of his inquiries, and of a man who mingles with every personal attempt after this object, the exercise of prayer, and a reverential sense of

his dependence on God. The latter is just as active, and just as inquisitive as the former. The difference between them does not lie in the one putting forth diligence without a feeling of dependence, and the other feeling dependence, without a putting forth of diligence. He who is in the right path towards the attainment of light, combines both these properties.

It is through the avenues of a desirous heart and of an exercised understanding, and of sustained attention, and of faculties in quest of truth, and labouring after the possession of it, that God sends into the mind his promised manifestations. All this exercise on the one hand, without such an acknowledgment of him as leads to prayer, will be productive of nothing in the way of spiritual discernment. And prayer, without this exercise, is the mere form and mockery of an acknowledgment. He who calls upon us to hearken diligently, when he addresses us by a living voice, does in effect call upon us to read and to ponder diligently when he addresses us by a written message. To ask truth of God, while we neglect to do for this object what he bids us, is in fact not to recognize God, but to insult him. It is to hold out the appearance of presenting ourselves before him, while we are not doing it at the place of meeting, which he has assigned for us. It is to address an imaginary Being, whom we have invested with a character of our own conception, and not the Being who bids us search his Scriptures, and incline unto his testimonies, and stir ourselves up that we may lay hold of him. Such prayer is utterance, and nothing more. It wants all the substantial characters of prayer. It may amount to the seeking of those who shall not be able to enter the strait gate. It falls short of the striving of those who take the kingdom of heaven by force, and of whom that kingdom suffereth violence.

He who without prayer looks confidently forward to success as the fruit of his own investigations, is not walking humbly with God. If he were humble he would pray. But whether is he the more humble who joins with a habit of prayer, all those accompanying circumstances which God hath prescribed, or he who, in neglect of these circumstances, ventures himself into his presence in the language of supplication? There may be the show

of humility in confiding the whole cause of our spiritual and saving illumination to the habit of praying for it to God. But if God himself tells us, that we must read, and seek, and meditate, then it is no longer humility to keep by the solitary exercise of praying. It is, in fact, keeping pertinaciously by our own way, heedless of his will and his way altogether. It is approaching God in the pride of our own understanding. It is detaching from the whole work of seeing after him some of those component parts which he himself hath recommended. In the very act of making prayer stand singly out as the alone instrument of success, we are in fact drawing the life and the spirit out of prayer itself; and causing it to wither into a thing of no power and no significancy in the sight of God. It is not the prayer of acknowledgment, unless it comes from him who acknowledges the will of God in other things as well as in prayer. It is not the prayer of submission unless it comes from the heart of a man who manifests a principle of submission in all things.

Thirdly, We ought to do all that we know to be God's will, and to this habit of humble earnest desirous reformation more will be given.

We trust that what has been said will prepare you for the reception of another advice besides that of reading or praying for the attainment of that manifestation which you are in quest of, —and that is, doing. There is an alarm raised in many a heart at the very suggestion of doing for an inquirer, lest he should be misled as to the ground of his justification; lest among the multitude or the activity of his works, he should miss the truth, that a man is accepted, not through the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ; lest by every one performance of duty, he should just be adding another stone to the fabric of a dulusive confidence, and presumptuously try to force his own way to heaven, without the recognition of the gospel or any of its peculiarities. Now, doing stands precisely in the same relation to prayer that reading does. Without the one or the other it is the prayer either of presumption or hypocrisy. If he both read and pray, it is far more likely that he will be brought unto the condition of a man being justified through faith in Christ,

than that he will rest his hopes before God in the mere exercise of reading. If he both do and pray, it is far more likely that he will come to be established in the righteousness of Christ, as the foundation of all his trust, than that he will rest upon his own righteousness. For a man to give up sin at the outset, is just to do what God wills him at the outset. For a man at the commencement of his inquiries, to be strenuous in the relinquishment of all that he knows to be evil, is just to enter on the path of approach towards Christ, in the very way that Christ desires him. He who cometh unto me must forsake all. For a man to put forth an immediate hand to the doing of the commandments, while he is grouping his way towards a firm basis on which he might rear his security before God, is not to deviate or diverge from the Saviour. He may do it with an eye of most intense earnestness towards the Saviour,—and while the artificial interpreter of Christ's doctrine holds him to be wrong, Christ himself may recognize him to be one of those who keep his sayings, and to whom therefore he stands pledged to manifest himself. The man in fact by strenuously doing, is just the more significantly and the more energetically praying. He is adding one ingredient to the business of seeking, without which the other ingredient would be in God's sight an abomination. He is struggling against all regard to iniquity in his heart, seeing that if he have this regard God will not hear him. To say, that it is dangerous to tell a man in these circumstances to do, lest he rest in his doings and fall short of the Saviour, is to say, that it would be dangerous to place a man on the road to his wished-for home, lest when he has got upon the road, he should stand still and be satisfied. The more, in fact, that the man's conscience is exercised and enlightened (and what more fitted than wilful sin to deafen the voice of conscience altogether?) the less will it let him alone, and the more will it urge him onward to that righteousness which is the only one commensurate to God's law, and in which alone the holy and inflexible God can look upon him with complacency. Let him humbly betake himself, then, to the prescribed path of reading, and prayer and obvious reformation,—and let us see if there do not evolve upon his mind, in the prosecution of it, the worthlessness of all

that man can do for his meritorious acceptance with the Lawgiver—and the deep ungodliness of character which adheres to him—and the suitableness of Christ's atonement to all his felt necessities, and all his moral aspirations—and the need in which he stands of a regenerating influence, to make him a willing and a spiritual subject of God. Let us see whether, though the light which he at length receives be marvellous, the way is not plain which leads to it; and whether though nature be compassed about with a darkness which no power of nature can dissipate,—there is not a clear and obvious procedure, by the steps of which the most alienated of her children may be carried onwards to all the manifestation of the kingdom of grace, and to the discernment of all its mysteries.

Though, to the natural eye, then, the doctrine of Christ be not plain, the way is plain by which we arrive at it. Though, ere we see the things of Christ, the Spirit must take of them and show them unto us,—yet this Spirit deals out such admonitions to all, that, if we follow them, he will not cease to enlarge, and to extend his teaching, till we have obtained a saving illumination. He is given to those who obey him. He abandons those who resist him. When conscience tells us to read, and to pray, and to reform, it is he who is prompting this faculty. It is he who is sending through this organ, the whispers of his own voice to the ear of the inner man. If we go along with the movement, he will follow it up by other movements. He will visit him who is the willing subject of his first influences by higher demonstrations. He will carry forward his own work in the heart of that man, who, while acting upon the suggestions of his own moral sense, is in fact acting in conformity to the warnings of this kind and faithful monitor. So that the Holy Spirit will connect his very first impulses on the mind of that inquirer, who under the reign of earnestness, has set himself to read his Bible, and to knock with importunity at the door of heaven, and to forsake the evil of his ways, and to turn him to the practice of all that he knows to be right,—the Spirit will connect these incipient measures of a seeker after Zion, with the acquirement of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

Let it not be said, then, that because the doctrine of Christ is shrouded in mystery to the general eye of the world, it is such a mystery as renders it inaccessible to the men of the world. Even to them does the trumpet of invitation blow a certain sound. They may not yet see the arcana of the temple, but they may see the road which leads to the temple. If they are never to obtain admission there, it is not because they cannot, but because they will not, come to it. "Ye will not come to me," says the Saviour, "that ye might have life." Reading, and prayer, and reformation, these are all obvious things; and it is the neglect of these obvious things which involves them in the guilt and the ruin of those who neglect the great salvation. This salvation is to be found of those who seek after it. The knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, which is life everlasting, is a knowledge open and acquirable to all. And, on the day of judgment, there will not be found a single instance of a man condemned because of unbelief, who sought to the uttermost of his opportunities; and evinced the earnestness of his desire after peace with God, by doing all that he might have done, and by being all that he might have been.

Be assured, then, that it will be for want of seeking, if you do not find. It will be for want of learning, if you are not taught. It will be for want of obedience to the movements of your own conscience, if the Holy Ghost, who prompts and who stimulates the conscience to all its movements, be not poured upon you, in one large and convincing manifestation. It may still be the day of small things with you—a day despised by the accomplished adepts of a systematic and articled theology. But God will not despise it. He will not leave your longings for ever unsatisfied. He will not keep you standing always at the threshold of vain desires and abortive endeavors. That faith, which is the gift of God, you have already, attained in a degree, if you have obtained a general conviction of the importance and reality of the whole matter. He will increase that faith. Act up to the light that you have gotten by reading earnestly and praying importunately, and striving laboriously,—and to you more will be given. You will at length obtain a clear and satisfying im-

pression of the things of God, and the things of salvation. Christ will be recognized in all his power and in all his preciousness. You will know what it is to be established upon him. The natural legality of your hearts will give way to the pure doctrine of acceptance with God, through faith in the blood of a crucified Saviour. The sanctifying influence of such a faith will not merely be talked of in word, but be experienced in power; and you will evince that you are God's workmanship in Christ Jesus, by your abounding in all those fruits of righteousness which are through him, to the praise and glory of the Father.

II. We shall now attempt to explain, how it is that the mysteries of the gospel are, in many cases, evolved upon the mind in a clear and convincing manifestation.

And here let it be distinctly understood, that the way in many cases may be very far from the way in all cases. The experience of converts is exceedingly various,—nor do we know a more frequent, and at the same time a more groundless cause of anxiety, than that by which the mind of an inquirer is often harrassed, when he attempts to realize the very process by which another has been called out of darkness to the marvellous light of the gospel.

Referring, then, to those grounds of mysteriousness which we have already specified in a former discourse,—God may so manifest himself to the mind of an inquirer, as to convince him, that all those analogies of common life which are taken from the relation of a servant to his master, or of a son to his father, or of a subject to his sovereign, utterly fail in the case of man, as he is by nature, in relation to his God. A servant may discharge all his obligations; a son may acquit himself of all his duties, or may, with his occasional failures, and his occasional chastisements, still keep his place in the instinctive affection of his parents; and a subject may, persevere in unseduced loyalty to the earthly government under which he lives. But the glaring and the demonstrable fact with regard to man, viewed as a creature, is, that the habit of his heart is one continued habit of dislike and resistance to the Creator who gave him birth.

The earthly master may have all those services rendered to which he has a right, and so be satisfied. The earthly father

may have all the devotedness, and all the attachment from his family, which he can desire, and so be satisfied. The earthly sovereign may have all that allegiance from a loyal subject, who pays his taxes, and never transgresses his laws, which he expects or cares for, and so be satisfied. But go upward from them to the God who made us,—to the God who keeps us,—to the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being,—to the God whose care and whose presence are ever surrounding us, who from morning to night, and from night to morning, watches over us, and tends us while we sleep, and guides us in our waking moments, and follows us to the business of the world, and brings us back in safety to our homes, and never for a single instant of time withdraws from us the superintendence of of an eye that never slumbers, and of a hand that is never weary. Now, all we require is a fair estimate of the claims of such a God. Does he ask too much, when he asks the affections of a heart that receives its every beat, and its every movement, from the impulse of his power? Does he ask too much, when he asks the devotedness of a life, which owes its every hour and its every moment to him, whose right hand preserves us continually? Has he no right to complain, when he knocks at the door of our hearts, and trying to possess himself of the love and the confidence of his own creatures, he finds that all their thoughts, and all their pursuits, and all likings, are utterly away from him? Is there no truth, and no justice, in the charge which he prefers against us,—when, surrounded as we are by the gifts of nature and of providence, all of which are his, the giver is meanwhile forgotten, and, amid the enjoyments of his bounty, we live without him in the world. If it indeed be true, that it is his sun which lights us on our path, and his earth on which we tread so firmly, and his air which circulates a freshness around our dwellings, and his rain which all the luxuriance that is spread around us, and drops upon every field the smiling promise of abundance for all the wants of his dependent children,—if all this be true, can it at the same time be right, that this all-providing God should have so little a place in our remembrance? that the whole man should be otherwise engaged, than with a sense of him, and the habitual exercise of acknowledg-

ment to him? that in fact the full play of his regards should be expended on the things which are formed, and through the whole system of his conduct and his affairs, there should be so utter a neglect of him who formed them? Surely if this be the true description of man, and the character of his heart in reference to God, then it is a case of too peculiar a nature to be illustrated by any of the analogies of human society. It must be taken up on its own grounds; and should the injured and offended Lawgiver offer to make it the subject of any communication, it is our part humbly to listen and implicitly to follow it.

And here it is granted, that amongst the men who are utter strangers to this communication, you meet with the better and the worse; and that there is an obvious line of distinction which marks off the base and the worthless amongst them, from those of them who are the valuable and the accomplished members of society. And yet do we aver that one may step over that line and not be nearer than he was to God,—that, between the men on either side of it, and Him who created them, there lies an untrodden gulf of separation,—that, with all the justice which rules their transactions, and all the honour which animates their bosoms, and all the compassion which warms their hearts, and streams forth either in tears of pity, or in acts of kindness, upon the miserable,—with all these virtues which they do have, and which serve both to bless and to adorn the condition of humanity, there is one virtue, which, prior to the reception and the influence of the gospel of Christ, they most assuredly do not have,—they are utterly devoid of godliness. They have no desire, and no inclination towards God. There may be the dread of him, and the occasional remembrance of him; but there is no affection for him.

This is the charge which we carry round amongst all the sons and daughters of Adam, who have not submitted themselves to the only name that is given under heaven whereby men can be saved. We are not denying that the persons of some of them are dignified by the more respectable attributes of character; and that, from the persons of others of them, there are beauteously reflected the more amiable, and endearing attributes of character. But we affirm, that with all these ran-

dom varieties of moral exhibition which are to be found—the principle of loyalty to God has lost the hold of a presiding influence over all the children of our degraded and undone nature. We ask you to collect all the scattered remnants of what is great, and of what is graceful in accomplishments that may have survived the fall of our first parents; and we pronounce, of the whole assemblage, that they go not to alleviate, by one iota, the burden of that controversy which lies between God and their posterity,—that throughout all the ranks and diversities of character which prevail in the world, there is one pervading affection of enmity to him; that the man of talents forgets that he has nothing which he did not receive, and so, courting by some lofty enterprize of mind, the gaze of this world's admiration, he renounces his God, and makes an idol of his fame,—that the man of ambition feels not how subordinate he is to the might and the majesty of his Creator, but turning away all his reverence from him, falls down to the idol of power,—that the man of avarice withdraws all his trust from the living God, and, embarking all his desire in the pursuit of riches, and all his security in the possession of them, he makes an idol of wealth,—that, descending from these to the average and the every-day members of our world's population, we see each walking after the counsel of his own heart, and in the sight of his own eyes, with every wish directed to the objects of time, and every hope bounded by its anticipations: And, amid all the love they bear to their families, and all the diligence they give to their business, and all the homage of praise and attachment they obtain from their friends, are they so surrounded by the influences of what is seen and what is sensible, that the invisible God is scarcely ever thought of, and his character not at all dwelt on with delight, and his will never admitted to an habitual and a practical ascendency over their conduct, so as to make it true of all, and of every one of us, that there is none who understandeth, and none who seeketh after God.

Now, if a man do not see this case made out against himself in all its enormity, he will feel that the man who talks of it, and who proposes the gospel application to it, talketh mysteriously. If the Spirit have not convinced him of sin, and he have not

learned to submit his character to the lofty standard of a law which offers to subordinate to the will of God, not merely the whole habit of his outward history, but also the whole habit of his inward affections, both the disease and the remedy are alike unknown to him. His character may be fair and respectable in the eyes of men; but it will not carry upon it one feature of that spirituality and holiness, and relish for those exercises that have God for their immediate object, which assimilate men to angels, and make them meet for the joys of eternity. His morality will be the morality of life, and his virtues will be the virtues of the world; and all the mystery of a parable, or of a dark saying will appear to hang over the terms and the explanations of that gospel, against the light of which, the god of this world blindeth the minds of those who believe not.

Let us therefore reflect that the principle on which the peculiarities of the gospel look so mysterious, is just the feeling which nature has of its own sufficiency; and, that you may renounce this delusive feeling altogether, we ask you to think, how totally destitute you are of that which God chiefly requires of you. He requires your heart, and we venture to say of every man amongst you, who has heretofore lived in neglect of the great salvation, that his heart, with all its objects and affections, is away from God,—that it is not a sense of obligation to him which forms the habitual and the presiding influence of its movements,—that therefore every day and every hour of your history in the world, accumulates upon you the guilt of a disobedience of a far deeper and more offensive character than even the disobedience of your more notorious and external violations. There is ever with you, lying folded in the recesses of your bosom, and pervading the whole system both of your desires and of your doings that which gives to sin all its turpitude, and all its moral hideousness in the sight of God. There is a rooted preference of the creature to the Creator. There is a full desire after the gift, and a listless ingratitude towards the giver. There is an utter devotedness, in one shape or other, to the world that is to be burnt up,—and an utter forgetfulness, amid all your forms, and all your decencies, of him who endureth for ever. There is that universal attribute of the carnal

mind—enmity against God; and we affirm that, with this distaste in your hearts towards him, you, on every principle of a spiritual and intelligent morality, are as chargeable with rebellion against your Maker, as if some apostate angel had been your champion, and you warred with God, under the waving standards of defiance. It was to clear away the guilt of this monstrous iniquity that Christ died. It was to make it possible for God, with his truth unviolated, and his holiness untarnished, and all the high attributes of his eternal and unchangeable nature unimpaired, to hold out forgiveness to the world,—that propitiation was made through the blood of his own son, even that God might be just, while the justifier of them who believe in Jesus. It is to make it possible for man to love the Being whom nature taught him to hate and to fear, that God now lifts, from his mercy-seat, a voice of the most beseeching tenderness, and smiles upon the world as God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing unto them their trespasses. It was utterly to shift the moral constitution of our minds,—an achievement beyond any power of humanity,—that the Saviour, after he died and rose again, obtained the promise of the Father, even that Spirit, through whom alone the fixed and radical disease of nature can be done away. And thus, by the ministration of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, does he undertake not only to improve but to change us,—not only to repair but to re-make us,—not only to amend our evil works, but to create us anew unto good works, that we may be the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. These are the leading and essential peculiarities of the New Testament. This is the truth of Christ; though to the general mind of the world it is the truth of Christ in a mystery. These are the parables which the commissioned messengers of grace are to deal out to the sinful children of Adam,—and dark as they may appear, or disgusting as they may sound in the ears of those who think that they are rich, and have need of nothing, they are the very articles upon which hope is made to beam on the heart of a converted sinner—and peace is restored to him,—and acceptance with God is secured by the terms of an unalterable covenant, —and the only effective instruments of a vital and substantial

reformation are provided; so that he who before was dead in trespasses and sins is quickened together with Christ, and made alive unto God, and renewed again after his image, and enabled to make constant progress in all the graces of a holy and spiritual obedience.

SERMON IV.

AN ESTIMATE OF THE MORALITY THAT IS WITHOUT GODLINESS.

JOB ix. 30—33.

"If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean: Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any day's-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."

To the people of every Christian country the doctrine of a Mediator between God and man is familiarized by long possession; though to many of them it be nothing more than the familiarity of a name recognized as a well-known sound by the ear, without sending one fruitful or substantial thought into the understanding. For, let it be observed, that the listless acquiescence of the mind, in a doctrine, to the statement or to the explanation of which it has been long habituated, is a very different thing from the actual hold which the mind takes of the doctrine.—insomuch that it is very possible for a man to be a lover of orthodoxy, and to sit with complacency under its ministers, and to be revolted by the heresies of those who would either darken or deny any of its articles,—and, in a word, to be most tenacious in his preference for that form of words to which he has been accustomed while to the meaning of the words themselves, the whole man is in a state of entire dormancy, and delighted though he really be by the utterance of the truth, exhibits not in his person, or in his history, one evidence of that practical ascendency which Christian truth is sure to exert over the heart and the habits of every genuine believer.

In the midst of all this dimness, and all this indolence about the realities of salvation, it is refreshing to view the workings of a mind that is in earnest; and of a mind too, which, instead of being mechanically carried forward in the track of a prescribed or authoritative orthodoxy, is prompted to all its aspirations by a deep feeling of guilt, and of necessity. Such we conceive to have been the mind of Job, to whom the doctrine of a Redeemer had not been explicitly unfolded, but who seems at times to have been favoured with a prophetic glimpse of him through the light of a dim and distant futurity. The state of his body, covered as it was with disease, makes him an object of sympathy. But there is a still deeper and more attractive sympathy excited by the state of his soul, labouring under the visitation of a hand that was too heavy for him; called out to combat with God and struggling to maintain it; at one time, tempted to measure the justice of his cause with the righteousness of Heaven's dispensations; at another, closing his complaint with the murmurs of a despairing acquiescence; and at length brought, through all the varieties of an exercised and agitated spirit, to submit himself to God, and to repent in dust and in ashes.

There is a darkness in the book of Job. He, at one time, under the soreness of his calamity, gives way to impatience; and, at another, he seems to recall the hasty utterance of his more distempered moments. He, in one place, fills his mouth with arguments; and, in another, he appears willing to surrender them all, and to decline the unequal struggle of man contending with his Maker. He is evidently oppressed throughout by a feeling of want, without the full understanding of an adequate or an appropriate remedy. Now, it does give a higher sense of the value of this remedy, when we are made to witness the unsatisfied longings of one who lived in a dark and early period of the world,—when we hear him telling, as he does in these verses, where the soreness lies, and obscurely guessing at the ministration that is suited to it,—nor do we know a single passage of the Bible which carries home with greater effect the necessity of a Mediator, than that where Job, on his restless bed, is set before us, wearying himself in the

hopeless task of arguing with God, and calling for some day's-man betwixt them who might lay his hand upon them both.

The afflictions which were heaped upon Job made him doubt his acceptance with his Maker. This was the great burden of his complaint, and the recovery of this acceptance was the theme of many a fruitless and fatiguing speculation. We have one of these speculations in the verses which are now submitted to you; and as they are four in number, so there is such a distinction in the subjects of them, that the passage naturally resolves itself into four separate topics of illustration. In the 30th verse, we have an expedient proposed by Job, for the purpose of obtaining the acceptance which he longed after: "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean." In the 31st verse, we have the inefficacy of this expedient; "Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." In the 32d verse, he gives the reason of this inefficacy; "For he is not man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment." And in the 33d verse, he intimates to us the right expedient, under the form of complaining that he himself has not the benefit of it: "Neither is there any day's-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."

I. It is not to be wondered at, that even a mistaken efficacy should be ascribed to snow water, in the country of Job's residence, where snow, if ever it fell at all, must have fallen rarely, at very extraordinary seasons, and in the more elevated parts of his neighborhood. This rarity, added to its unsullied whiteness, might have given currency to an idea of its efficacy as a purifier, beyond what actually belonged to it. Certain it is, too, that snow water, like water deposited from the atmosphere, in any other form, does not possess that hardness which is often to be met with in spring water. But however this be, and whether the popular notion of the purifying virtues of snow water, taken up by Job, be well founded or not, we have here an expedient suggested for making the hands clean, and the man pure and acceptable in the sight of God,—a method proposed within the reach of man, and which man can perform, for making himself an object of complacency to his Maker,—a method

too, which is quite effectual for beautifying all that meets the discernment of the outward eye, and which is here set before us as connected with the object of gaining the eye of that high and heavenly Witness, with whom we have to do. This is what we understand to be represented by washing with snow water. It comprehends all that man can do for washing himself, and for making himself clean in the sight of God. Job complains of the fruitlessness of this expedient, and perhaps mingles with his complaints the reproaches of a spirit that was not yet subdued to entire acquiescence in the righteousness of God. Let us try to examine this matter, and, if possible, ascertain whether man is able, on the utmost stretch of his powers and of his performances, to make himself an object of approbation to his Judge.

Without entering into the metaphysical controversy about the extent or the freedom of human agency, let it be observed, that there is a plain and a popular understanding on the subject of what man can do and of what he cannot do. We wish to proceed on this understanding for the present, and to illustrate it by a few examples. Should it be asked, if a man can keep his hands from stealing, it would be the unhesitating answer of almost every one that he can do it,—and if he can keep his tongue from lying, that he can do it,—and if he can constrain his feet to carry him every Sabbath to the house of God, that he can do this also,—and if he can tithe his income, or even reducing himself to the necessaries of life, make over the mighty sacrifice of all the remainder to the poor, that it is certainly possible for him to do it,—and if he can keep a guard upon his lips, so that not one whisper of malignity shall escape from them, that he can also prescribe this task to himself, and is able to perform it,—and if he can read much of his Bible, and utter many prayers in private, that he can do it,—and if he can assemble his family on the morning and the evening of every day, and go through the worship of God along with them, that all this he can do,—that all this lies within the compass of human agency.

Let any one man do, then, what all men think it possible for him to do, and he will wear upon his person the visible exhibi-

tion of much to recommend him to the favourable judgment of his fellows. He will be guilty of no one transgression against the peace and order of society. He will be correct, and regular, and completely inoffensive. He will contribute many a deed of positive beneficence to the welfare of those around him; and may even, on the strength of his many decencies, and many observations, hold out an aspect of religiousness to the general eye of the world. There will be a wide and most palpable distinction of character between him, and those who at large from the principle of self-control, resign themselves to the impulse of every present temptation; and are either intemperate, or dishonest, or negligent of ordinances, just as habit, or the urgency of their feelings and their circumstances, may happen to have obtained the ascendency over them. These do not what they might, and what, in common estimation, they can do; and it is just because the man has put forth all his strenuousness to the task of accomplishing all that he is able for, that he looks so much more seemly than those who are beside him, and holds out a far more engaging display of what is moral and praise-worthy to all his acquaintances.

II. I will not be able to convince you how superficial the reformation of all these doings is, without passing on to the 31st verse, and proving, that in the pure eye of God the man who has made the most copious application in his power of snow water to the visible conduct, may still be an object of abhorrence; and that if God enter into judgment with him, he will make him appear as one plunged in the ditch, his righteouness as filthy rags, and himself as an unclean thing. There are a thousand things which, in popular and understood language, man can do. It is quite the general sentiment, that he can abstain from stealing, and lying, and calumny,—that he can give of his substance to the poor, and attend church, and pray, and read his Bible, and keep up the worship of God in his family. But, as an instance of distinction between what he can do, and what he cannot do let us make the undoubted assertion, that he can eat wormwood, and just put the question, if he can also relish wormwood. That is a different affair. I may command the performance; but have no such command over my organs of sense,

as to command a liking, or a taste for the performance. The illustration is homely; but it is enough for our purpose, if it be effective. I may accomplish the doing of what God bids; but have no pleasure in God himself. The forcible constraining of the hand, may make out many a visible act of obedience, but the relish of the heart may refuse to go along with it. The outer man may be all in a bustle about the commandments of God, while to the inner man God is an offence and a weariness. His neighbours may look at him, and all that their eye can reach may be as clean as snow water can make it. But the eye of God reaches a great deal farther. He is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and he may see the foulness of spiritual idolatry in every one of its receptacles. The poor man has no more conquered his rebellious affections, than he has conquered his distaste for wormwood. He may fear God; he may listen to God; and, in outward deed, may obey God. But he does not, and he will not, love God; and while he drags a heavy load of tasks, and duties, and observances after him, he lives in the hourly violation of the first and greatest of the commandments.

Would any parent among you count it enough that you obtained a service like this from one of your children? Would you be satisfied with the obedience of his hand, while you knew that the affections of his heart were totally away from you? Let every one requirement, issued from the chair of parental authority, be most rigidly and punctually done by him, would not the sullenness of his alienated countenance turn the whole of it into bitterness? It is the heart of his son which the parent longs after; and the lurking distaste and disaffection which rankle there, can never, never be made up by such an obedience, as the yoked and the tortured negro is compelled to yield to the whip of the overseer. The service may be done; but all that can minister satisfaction in the principle of the service, may be withheld from it; and though the very last item of the bidden performance is rendered, this will neither mend the deformity of the unnatural child, nor soothe the feelings of the afflicted and the mortified father.

God is the Father of spirits; and the willing subjection of the

spirit is that which he requires of us. "My son, give me thy heart;" and if the heart be withheld, God says of all our visible performances, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" The heart is his requirement; and full, indeed, is the title which he prefers to it. He put life into us; and it is he who hath drawn a circle of enjoyments, and friendships, and interests around us. Every thing that we take delight in, is ministered to us out of his hand. He plies us every moment with his kindness; and when at length the gift stole the heart of man away from the Giver, so that he became a lover of his own pleasure, rather than a lover of God, even then would he not leave us to perish in the guilt of our rebellion. Man made himself an alien, but God was not willing to abandon him; and, rather than lose him for ever, did he devise a way of access by which to woo, and to welcome him back again. The way of our recovery is indeed a way that his heart was set upon; and to prove it, he sent his own eternal Son into the world, who unrobed him of all his glories and made himself of no reputation. He had to travel in the greatness of his strength, that he might unbar the gates of acceptance to a guilty world; and now that, in full harmony with the truth and the justice of God, sinners may draw nigh through the blood of the atonement, what is the wonderful length to which the condescension of God carries him? Why, he actually beseeches us to be reconciled; and, with a tone more tender than the affection of an earthly father ever prompted, does he call upon us to turn, and to turn, for why should we die? if, after all this, the antipathy of nature to God still cleave to us; if, under the power of this antipathy, the service we yield be the cold and unwilling service of constraint; if, with many of the visible outworks of obedience, there be also the strugglings of a reluctant heart to take away from this obedience all its cheerfulness, is not God defrauded of his offering? Does there not rest on the moral aspect of our character, in reference to him, all the odiousness of unnatural children? Let our outer doings be what they may, does there not adhere to us the turpitude of having deeply revolted against that Being whose kindness has never abandoned us? And, though pure in the eye of our fellows, and our hands be clean as with snow

water, is there nothing in our hearts against which a spiritual law may denounce its severities, and, the giver of that law may lift a voice of righteous expostulation? "Hear ye now what the Lord saith: Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

It is not easy to lay open the utter nakedness of the natural heart in reference to God; or to convince the possessor, of it, that, under the guise of his many plausibilities, there may lurk that which gives to sin all its hideousness.

The mere man of ordinances cannot acquiesce in what he reckons to be the exaggerations of orthodoxy upon this subject; nor can he at all conceive how it is possible that, with so much of the semblance of godliness about him, there should, at the same time, be within him the very opposite of godliness. It is, indeed, a difficult task to carry upon this point the conviction of him who positively loves the Sabbath, and to whom the chime of its morning bells brings the delightful associations of peace and of sacredness,—who has his hours of prayer, at which he gathers his family around him, and his hours of attendance on that house where the man of God deals out his weekly lessons to the assembled congregation. It may be in vain to tell him, that God in fact is a weariness to his heart, when it is attested to him by his own consciousness; that when the preacher is before him, and the people are around him, and the professed object of their coming together is to join in the exercise of devotion, and to grow in the knowledge of God, he finds in fact that all is pleasantness, that his eye is not merely filled with the public exhibition, and his ear regaled by the impressiveness of a human voice, but that the interest of his heart is completely kept up by the succession and variety of the exercises. It may be in vain to tell him, that this religion of taste or this religion of habit, or this religion of inheritance, may utterly consist with the deep and the determined worldliness of all his affections,—that he whom he thinks to be the

God of his Sabbath is not the God of his week; but that, throughout all the successive days of it, he is going astray after the idols of vanity, and living without God in the world. This is demonstration enough of all his forms, and all his observations, being a mere surface display, without a living principle of piety. But perhaps it may serve more effectually to convince him of it, should we ask him, how his godliness thrives in the closet, and what are the workings of his heart, in the abstract and solitary hour of intercourse, with the unseen Father. In church, there may be much to interest him, and to keep him alive. But when alone, and deserted by all the accompaniments of a solemn assembly, we should like to know with what vivacity he enters on the one business of meditating on God, and holding converse with God. Is the sense of the all-seeing and ever-present Deity enough for him; and does love to God brighten and sustain the moments of solitary prayer? The mind may have enough to interest it in church; but does the secret exercise of fellowship with the Father bring no distaste, and no weariness along with it? Is it any thing more than the homage of a formal presentation? And when the business of devotion is thus unpeopled of all its externals, and of all its accessaries; when thus reduced to a naked exercise of spirit, can you appeal to the longings, and the affections of that spirit, as the essential proof of your godliness? And do you never, on occasions like this, discover that which is in your hearts, and detect their enmity to him who formed them? Do you afford no ground for the complaint which he uttered of old, when he said, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, and a land of darkness?" and do you not perceive that with this direction of your feelings and your desires away from the living God, though you be outwardly clean, as by the operation of snow water, he may plunge you in the ditch, and make your own clothes to abhor you?

We shall conclude this part of our subject with two observations.

First. The efforts of nature may, in point of inadequacy, be compared to the application of snow water. Yet there is a practical mischief here, in which the zeal of controversy, bent on its one point, and its one principle, may unconsciously in-

volve us. We are not, in pursuit of any argument whatever, to lose sight of efforts. We are not to deny them the place, and the importance which the Bible plainly assigns to them; nor are we to forbear insisting upon their performance by men, previous to conversion, and in the very act of conversion, and in every period of the progress, however far advanced it may be, of the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord. We speak just now of men, previous to conversion, and we call to your remembrance the example of John the Baptist. The injudicious way in which the doings of men have been spoken of, has had practically this effect on many an inquirer. Since doing is of so little consequence, let us even abstain from it. Now the forerunner of Christ spake a very different language. He unceasingly called upon the people to do; and this was the very preaching which the divine wisdom appointed as a preparation for the Saviour. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." —"Exact no more than that which is appointed."—"Do violence to no man; neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." Was not John, then, it may be said, a mere superficial reformer? Had he stopped short at this, he would have been no better. His teaching could have done no more than is done by the mere application of snow water. But he did not stop here. He told the people that there was a preacher, and a preaching to come after him, in comparison of which he and his sermons were nothing. He pointed the eye and the expectation of his hearers full upon one that was greater than himself; and, while he baptized with water unto repentance, and called upon the people to frame their doings, he told them of one mightier than he, who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

And, Secondly, That you may be convinced of the utter necessity of such a baptism, let us affirm the inadequacy of all the fairest virtues and accomplishments of nature. God has, for the well-being of society, provided man with certain feelings and constitutional principles of action, which lead him to a conduct beneficial to those around him; to which conduct he may be carried by the impulse of these principles, with as little re-

ference to the will of God, as a mother, among the inferior animals, when constrained by the sweet and powerful influences of natural affection, to guard the safety, and provide for the nourishment of her young. Take account of these principles as they exist in the bosom of man, and you there find compassion for the unfortunate; the shame of detection in any thing mean, or disgraceful; the desire of standing well in the opinion of his fellows; the kindlier charities, which shed a mild and a quiet lustre over the walks of domestic life; and those wider principles of patriotism and public usefulness which, combined with an appetite for distinction, will raise a few of the more illustrious of our race to some high and splendid career of beneficence. Now, these are the principles which, scattered in various proportions among the individuals of human kind, gave rise to the varied hues of character among them. Some possess them in no sensible degree; and they are pointed at with abhorrence, as the most monstrous and deformed of the species. Others have an average share of them; and they take their station amongst the common place characters of society. And others go beyond the average; and are singled out from amongst their fellows, as the kind, the amiable, the sweet-tempered, the upright, whose hearts swell with honourable feeling, or whose pulse beats high in the pride of integrity.

Now, conceive for a moment, that the belief of a God were to be altogether expunged from the world. We have no doubt that society would suffer most painfully in its temporal interests by such an event. But the machine of society might still be kept up; and on the face of it you might still meet with the same gradations of character, and the same varied distribution of praise, among the individuals who compose it. Suppose it possible, that the world could be broken off from the system of God's administration altogether; and that he were to consign it, with all its present accommodations, and all its natural principles, to some far and solitary place beyond the limits of his economy—we should still find ourselves in the midst of a moral variety of character; and man, sitting in judgment over it, would say of some, that they are good, and of others, that they are evil. Even in this desolate region of atheism, the eye of the

sentimentalist might expatiate among beauteous and interesting spectacles,—amiable mothers shedding their graceful tears over the tomb of departed infancy; high-toned integrity maintaining itself unsullied amid the allurements of corruption; benevolence plying its labours of usefulness; and patriotism earning its proud reward, in the testimony of an approving people. Here, then, you have compassion, and natural affection, and justice, and public spirit—but would it not be a glaring perversion of language to say, that there was godliness in a world, where there was no feeling and no conviction about God.

In the midst of this busy scene, let God reveal himself, not to eradicate these principles of action—but giving his sanction to whatsoever things are just, and lovely, and honourable, and of good report, to make himself known, at the same time as the Creator and Upholder of all things, and as the Being with whom all his rational offspring had to do. Is this solemn announcement from the voice of the Eternal to make no difference upon them? Are those principles which might flourish and be sustained on a soil of atheism, to be counted enough even after the wonderful truth of a living and a reigning God has burst upon the world? You are just;—right, indispensably right. You say you have asserted no more than your own. But this property is not your own. He gave it to you, and he may call upon you to give to him an account of your stewardship. You are compassionate;—right also. But what if he set up the measure of the sanctuary upon your compassion? and, instead of a desultory instinct, excited to feeling by a moving picture of sensibility, and limited in effect to a humble fraction of your expenditure, he call upon you to love your neighbour as yourself, and to maintain this principle at the expense of self-denial, and in the midst of manifold provocations? You love your children;—still indispensably right. But what if he should say, and he has actually said it, that you may know how to give good gifts unto your children, and still be evil? and that if you love father, or mother, or wife, or children, more than him, you are not worthy of him? The lustre of your accomplishments dazzles the eye of your neighbourhood, and you bask with a delighted heart in the sunshine of glory. But what if he should

say, that his glory, and not your own, should be the constant aim of your doings? and that if you love the praise of men more than the praise of God, you stand, in the pure and spiritual records of heaven, convicted of idolatry? You love the things of the world; and the men of the world, coming together in judgment upon you, take no offence at it. But God takes offence at it. He says,—and is he not right in saying?—that if the gift withdraw the affections from the Giver, there is something wrong; that the love of these things is opposite to the love of the Father; and that, unless you withdraw your affections from a world that perisheth, you will perish along with it. Surely if these, and such like principles, may consist with the atheism of a world where God is unthought of and unknown, —you stand convicted of a still deeper and more determined atheism, who under the revelation of a God challenging the honour that is due unto his name, are satisfied with your holding in society, and live without him in the world.

SERMON V.

THE JUDGMENT OF MEN, COMPARED WITH THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

1 CORINTHIANS IV. 3, 4.

"With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of, or of man's judgment—he that judgeth me is the Lord."

III. WHEN two parties meet together on the business of adjusting their respective claims, or when, in the language of our text, they come together in judgment, the principles on which they proceed must depend on the relation in which they stand to each other: and we know not a more fatal, or a more deep-laid delusion, than that by which the principles, applicable to the case of a man entering into judgment with his fellow-men, are transferred to the far different case of man's entering into judgment with his God. Job seems to have been aware of this difference, and at times to have been humbled by it. In reference to man, he stood on triumphant ground, and often spoke of it in a style of boastful vindication. No one could impeach his justice. No one could question his generosity. And he made his confident appeal to the remembrance of those around him, when he says of himself, that he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him; that the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy; that he put on righteousness, and it clothed him, and his judgment was as a robe and a diadem; that he was eyes to the blind, and feet was he to the lame; that he was a father to the poor, and the cause that he knew not, he searched out. On these grounds

did he challenge the judgment of man, and actually obtained *it*. For we are told, because he did all this, that when the ear heard him, then it blessed him, and when the eye saw him, it gave witness unto him.

There is not a more frequent exercise of mind in society, than that by which the members of it form and declare their judgment of each other—and the work of thus deciding is a work which they all share in, and on which, perhaps, there is not a day of their lives wherein they are not called upon to expend some measure of attention and understanding—and we know not if there be a single topic that more readily engages the conversation of human beings—and often do we utter our own testimony, and hear the testimony of others to the virtues and vices of the absent—and out of all this has arisen a standard of estimation—and it is such a standard as many may actually reach, and some have actually exceeded—and thus it is, that it appears to require a very extended scale of reputation to take in all the varieties of human character—and while the lower extremity of it is occupied by the dishonest, and the perfidious, and the glaringly selfish, who are outcasts from general respect; on the higher extremity of it, do we behold men, to whom are awarded, by the universal voice, all the honours of a proud and unsullied excellence—and their walk in the world is dignified by the reverence of many salutations—and as we hear of their truth and their uprightness, and their princely liberalities, and of a heart alive to every impulse of sympathy, and of a manner sweetened by all the delicacies of genuine kindness;—Who does not see that, in this assemblage of moral graces and accomplishments, there is enough to satisfy man, and to carry the admiration of man? and can we wonder if, while we gaze on so fine a specimen of our nature, we should not merely pronounce upon him an honourable sentence at the tribunal of human judgment, but we should conceive of him that he looks as bright and faultless in the eye of God, and that he is in every way meet for his presence and his friendship in eternity.

Now, if there be any truth in the distinction of our text; if a man may have the judgment of his fellows, and yet be utterly unfit for contending in judgment with God; if there be any em-

phasis in the consideration, that he is God, and not man; or any delusion in conceiving of him, that he is altogether like unto ourselves,—may not all that ready circulation of praise, and of acknowledgment, which obtains in society, carry a most ruinous, and a most bewitching influence along with it? It is not possible that on the applause of man there may be reared a most treacherous self-complacency? Might not we build a confidence before God, on this sandy foundation? Think you not, that it is just this ill-supported confidence which shuts out from many a heart the humiliating doctrine of the gospel? Is there no such imagination as that because we are so well able to stand our ground before the judgment of the world, we shall be equally well able to stand our ground before the judgment-seat of the great day? Are there not many who, upon this very principle, count themselves rich and to have need of nothing? And have you never met with men of character, and estimation in society, who, surrounded by the gratulations of their neighbourhood, find the debasing views of humanity, which are set before us in the New Testament, to be beyond their comprehension; who are utterly in the dark, as to the truth and the justness of such representations, and with whom the voice of God is therefore deafened by the voice and the testimony of men? They see not themselves in that character of vileness and of guilt which he ascribes to them. They are blind to the principle of the text, that he is not a man; and that they may not be able to answer him, though they may be able to meet the every reproach, and to hold out the lofty vindication against every charge, which any one of their fellows may prefer. And thus it is, that many live in the habitual neglect of a salvation which they cannot see that they require; and spend their days in an insidious security, from which nothing but the voice of the last messenger, or the call of the last trumpet, shall awaken them.

To do away this delusion, we shall advert to two leading points of distinction between the judgment of men and that of God. There is a distinction founded upon the claims which God has a right to prefer against us, when compared with the claims which our fellow-men have a right to prefer against us; —and there is a distinction founded upon that clearer and more

elevated sense which God has of that holiness without which no man shall see his face, of that moral worth without which we are utterly unfit for the society of heaven.

The people around me have no right to complain, if I give to every man his own; or, in other words, if I am true to all my promises, and faithful to all my bargains; and if what I claim as justice to myself, I most scrupulously render to others, when they are in like circumstances with myself. Now, let me do all this, and I earn amongst my fellows, the character of a man of honour and of equity. Did I live with such a character in an unfallen world, these virtues would not at all signalize me, though the opposite vices would mark me out for universal surprise and indignation. But it so happens that I live in a world full of corruption, where deceit and dishonesty are common;—where, though the higher degrees of them are spoken of with abhorrence, the lower degrees of them are looked at with a very general connivance;—where the inflexibility of a truth that knows not one art of concealment, and the delicacy of an honour that was never tainted, would greatly signalize me;—and thus it is, that though I went not beyond the strict requirements of integrity, yet by my nice and unvarying fulfilment of them, should I rise above the ordinary level of human reputation, and be rewarded by the most flattering distinctions of human applause.

But again, I may in fact give to others more than their own; and in so doing I may earn the credit of other virtues. I may gather an additional lustre around my character, and collect from those around me the tribute of a still louder and more rapturous approbation. I may have a heart constitutionally framed to the feeling and the exercise of compassion. I may scatter on every side of me the treasures of beneficence. I may have an eye for pity, and a hand open as day for melting charity. I may lay aside a large proportion of my wealth to the service of others,—and what with a bosom open to every impulse of pity, and with an eye ever lighted up by the smile of courteousness, and with a ready ear to all that is offered in the shape of complaint or supplication, I may not go beyond the demands of others, but I may go greatly beyond all that they

have a right to demand, and if I signalize myself by rendering faithfully to every man his due,—still more shall I signalize myself by a kindness that is never weary, by a liberality that never is exhausted.

Now, we need not offer to assign the precise degree to which a man must carry the exercise of these gratuitous virtues, ere he can obtain for them the good will, and the good opinion of society. We need not say by how small a fraction of his income, he may thus purchase the homage of his acquaintances, —at how easy a rate he may send away one person delighted by his affability; or another by the hospitality of his reception; or a third by the rendering of a personal service; or a fourth by the direct conveyance of a present,—or, finally, for what expense he may surround himself by the gratitude of many poor, and the blessings and the prayers of many cottages. We cannot bring forward any rigid computation of this matter. But we appeal to the experience of your own history, and to your observation of others, if a man might not, without any painful, or any sensible surrender of enjoyment at all, stand out to the eye of others in a blaze of moral reputation—if the substantial citizen might not, on the convivialities of friendship, be indulging his own taste, and at the very time be securing from his pleased and satisfied guests, the attestations of their cordiality —if the man of business might not be nobly generous to his friends in adversity, and at the same time be running one unvaried career of accumulation—if the man of society might not be charming every acquaintance by the truth and the tenderness of his expressions, and at the same time, instead of impairing, be heightening his share of that felicity, which the Author of our being has annexed to human intercourse—if a thousand little acts of accommodation from one neighbour to another, might not swell the tide of praise and of popularity, and yet, as ample a remainder of pleasurable feeling be left to each as before.—And even when the sacrifice is more painful, and the generosity more romantic, and man can appeal to some mighty reduction of wealth as the measure of his beneficence to others, might it not be said of him, if the life be more than meat, and the body than raiment, that still there is left to him more than

he can possibly surrender? that, though he strip himself of all his goods to feed the poor, there remains to him that, without which all is nothingness,—that a breathing and a conscious man, he still treads on the face of our world, and bears his part in that universe of life, where the unfailing compassion of God still continues to uphold him,—that instead of lying wrapt in the insensibility of an eternal grave, he has all the images of a waking existence around him, and all the glories of immortality before him,—that instead of being withered to a thing of nought, and gone to that dark and hidden land, where all is silence and deep annihilation, a thousand avenues of enjoyment are still open to him, and the promise of a daily provision is still made sure, and he is free to all the common blessings of nature, and he is freer still to all the consolations, and to all the privileges of the gospel.

Thus it appears that after I have fulfilled all the claims of men, and men are satisfied,—that after having gone, in the exercise of liberality, beyond these claims, and men are filled with delight and admiration,—that after, on the footing of equal and independent rights, I have come into judgment with my fellows, and they have awarded to me the tribute of their most honourable testimony, the footing on which I stand with God still remains to be attended to, and his claims still remain to be adjusted,—and the mighty account still lies uncancelled between the creature and the Creator,—between the man who, in reference to his neighbours, can say, I give every one his own, and out of my own I expatiate in acts of tenderness and generosity amongst them, and the God who can say, You have nothing that you did not receive, and all you ever gave is out of the ability which I have conferred upon you, and this wealth is not your own, but his who bestowed it, and who now calls upon you to render an account of your stewardship,—between the man, who has purchased by a fraction of his property, the good will of his acquaintances, and the God who asserts his right to have every fraction of it turned into an expression of gratitude, and devoted to his glory,—between the man who holds up his head in society, because his justice, and the ministrations of his liberality, have distinguished him, and the God who demands the returns of

duty and of acknowledgment, for giving him the fund of these ministrations, and for giving what no money can purchase,—for putting the principle of life into his bosom,—for furnishing him with all his senses, and, through these inlets of communication, giving him a part, and a property, in all that is aronnd him,—for sustaining him in all the elements of his being, and conferring upon him all his capacities, and all his joys.

Now, what we wish you to feel is, that the judgment of men may be upon your side, and the judgment of God be most righteously against you—that while from the one nothing is heard but admiration and gratitude, from the other, there may be such a charge of sinfulness, as, when set in order before your eye, will convince you, that he by whom you consist, is defrauded of all his offerings,—that, while all the common honesties and humanities of social life, are acquitted to the entire satisfaction of others, and to the entire purity of your own reputation in the world, your whole heart and conduct may be utterly pervaded by the habit of ungodliness,—that, while not one claim which your neighbours can prefer, is not met most readily, and discharged most honourably, the great claims of the Creator, over those whom he has formed, may lie altogether unheeded; and he, your constant benefactor, be not loved,—and he, your constant preserver, be not depended on,—and he, your most legitimate sovereign, be not obeyed,—and he, the unseen Spirit, who pervades all, and upholds all, be neither worshipped in spirit and in truth, nor vested with the hold of a rightful supremacy over your rebellious affections.

God is not man; nor can we measure what is due to him, by what is due to our fellows in society. He made us, and he upholds us, and at his will the life which is in us, will, like the expiring vapour, pass away; and the tabernacle of the body, that curious frame-work which man thinks he can move at his own pleasure, when it is only in God that he moves, as well as lives, and has his being, will, when abandoned by its spirit, mix with the dust out of which it was formed, and enter again into the unconscious glebe from which it was taken. It was, indeed, a wondrous preferment for unshapen clay to be wrought into so fine an organic structure, but not more wondrous surely than

that the soul which animates it should have been created out of nothing; and what shall we say, if the compound being so originated, and so sustained, and depending on the will of another for every moment of his continuance, is found to spurn the thought of God, in distaste and disaffection away from him? When the spirit returns to him who sitteth on the throne; when the question is put, Amid all the multitude of your doings in the world, what have you done unto me? When the rightful ascendency of his claims over every movement of the creature is made manifest by him who judgeth righteously; when the high but just pretensions of all things being done to his glory; of the entire heart being consecrated in every one of its regards to his person and character; of the whole man being set apart to his service, and every compromise being done away, between the world on the one hand, and that Being on the other, who is jealous of his honour:—when these high pretensions are set up and brought into comparison with the character and the conduct of any one of us, and it be inquired in how far we have rendered unto God the ever-breathing gratitude that is due to him, and that obedience which we should feel at all times to be our task and our obligation; how shall we fare in that great day of examination, if it be found that this has not been the tendency of our nature at all? and when he who is not a man shall thus enter into judgment with us, how shall we be able to stand?

Amid all the praise we give and receive from each other, we may have no claims to that substantial praise which cometh from God only. Men may be satisfied, but it followeth not that God is satisfied. Under a ruinous delusion upon this subject, we may fancy ourselves to be rich, and have need of nothing, while, in fact, we are naked, and destitute, and blind, and miserable. And thus it is, that there is a morality of this world, which stands in direct opposition to the humbling representations of the Gospel; which cannot comprehend what it means by the utter worthlessness and depravity of our nature; which passionately repels this statement, and that too on its own consciousness of attainments superior to those of the sordid, and the profligate, and the dishonourable; and is fortified in its resistance to the truth as it is in Jesus, by the flattering testimo-

nials which it gathers to its respectability and its worth from the various quarters of human society.

A just sense of the extent of claim which God has upon his own creatures, would lay open this hiding-place of security: would lead us to see, that to do some things for our neighbours, is not the same with doing all things for our Maker; that a natural principle of honesty to man, is altogether distinct from a principle of entire devotedness to God; that the tithe which we bestow upon others is not an equivalent for a total dedication unto God of ourselves, and of all which belongs to us; that we may present those around us with many an offering of kindness, and not present our bodies a living sacrifice to God, which is our reasonable service; that we may earn a cheap and easy credit for such virtues as will satisfy the world, and be utter strangers to the self-denial, and the spirituality, and the mortification of every earthly desire, and the affection for the things that are above;—all of which graces enter as essential ingredients into the sanctification of the gospel.

But this leads us to the second point of distinction between the judgment of man and that of God,—even his clearer and more elevated sense of that holiness without which no man shall see his face, and of that moral worth without which we are utterly unfit for the society of heaven.

Man's sense of the right and the wrong may be clear and intelligent enough, in so far as that part of character is concerned which renders us fit for the society of earth. Those virtues, without which a community could not be held together, are both urgently demanded by that community, and highly appreciated by it. The morality of our earthly life, is a morality which is in direct subservience to our earthly accommodation; and seeing that equity, and humanity, and civility, are in such visible and immediate connexion with all the security, and all the enjoyment which they spread around them, it is not to be wondered at, that they should throw over the character of him by whom they are exhibited, the lustre of a grateful and a superior estimation. And thus it is, that even without any very nice or exquisite refinement of these virtues, many an ordinary character will pass;—and should that character be deformed

by the levities, or even by the profligacies of intemperance, he who sustains it may still bear his part among the good men of society,—and keep away from it all that malignity, and all that dishonesty, which have a disturbing effect on the enjoyments of others, and these others will still retain their kindliness for the good-humoured convivialist,—and he will be suffered to retain his own taste, and his own peculiarities; and, though it may be true, that chastity, and self-control, and the severer virtues of personal discipline and restraint, would in fact give a far more happy and healthful tone to society than at present it possesses, yet this influence is not so conspicuous, and heedless men do not look so far: and therefore it is, that in spite of his many outward and positive transgressions of the divine law, many an individual can be referred to, who, with his average share of the integrities and the sensibilities of social life, has stamped upon him the currency of a very fair every-day character, who moves among his fellows without disgrace, and meets with acceptance throughout the general run of this world's companies.

If such a measure of indulgence be extended to the very glaring iniquities of the outer man, let us not wonder though the errors of the heart, the moral diseases of the spirit, the disorganization of the inner man, with its turbulent passions, and its worldly affections, and its utter deadness to the consideration of an overruling God, should find a very general indulgence among our brethren of the species. Bring a man to sit in judgment over the depravities of our common nature, and unless these depravities are obviously pointed against the temporal good of society, what can we expect, but that he will connive at the infirmities of which he feels himself to be so large and so habitual a partaker? What can we expect but that his moral sense, clouded as it is against the discernment of his own exceeding turpitude, will also perceive but dimly, and feel but obtusely, a similar turpitude in the character of others? What else can we look for, than that the man who fires so promptly on the reception of an injury, will tolerate in his fellow all the vindictive propensities?—or, that the man who feels not in his bosom a single movement of principle or of tenderness towards God,

will tolerate in another an equally entire habit of ungodliness? —or, that the man who surrenders himself to the temptations of voluptuousness, will perceive no enormity of character at all in the unrestrained dissipations of an acquaintance?—and, in a word, when I see a man whose rights I have never invaded, who has no complaint of personal wrong or provocation to allege against me, and who shares equally with myself in natures blindness and nature's propensities, I will not be afraid of entering into judgment with him;—nor shall I stand in awe of any penetrating glance from his eye, of any indignant remonstrance from his offended sense of what is righteous, though there be made bare to his inspection all my devotedness to the world, and all my proud disdain at the insolence of others, and all my anger at the sufferings of injustice, and all my indifference to the God who formed me, and all those secrecies of an unholy and an unheavenly character, which are to be brought out into full manifestation on the great day of the winding up of this world's history.

It is a very capital delusion that God is like unto man,—"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

Man and man may come together in judgment, and retire from each other in mutual complacency. But when man and God thus come together, there is another principle, and another standard of examination. There is a claim of justice on the part of the Creator, totally distinct from any claim which a fellow creature can prefer,—and while the one will tolerate all that is consistent with the economy and the interest of the society upon earth, the other can tolerate nothing that is inconsistent with the economy and the character of the society in heaven. God made us for eternity. He designed us to be the members of a family which never separates, and over which he himself presides in the visible glory of all that worth, and of all that moral excellence, which belong to him. He formed us at first after his own likeness; and ere we can be readmitted into that paradise from which we have been exiled, we must be cre-

ated anew in the image of God. These spirits must be made perfect, and every taint of selfishness and impurity be done away from them. Heaven is the place into which nothing that is unclean or unholy can enter; and we are not preparing for our inheritance there, unless there be gathering upon us here, the lineaments of a celestial character. Now, a man may be accomplished in the moralities of civil and of social life, without so much as the semblance of such a character resting upon him. He may have no share whatsoever in the tastes, or in the enjoyments, or in the affections of paradise. There might not be a single trace of the mark of the Lamb of God upon his forehead. He who ponders so intelligently the secrets of the heart, may be able to discover there no vestige of any love for himself,—no sensibility at all to what is amiable or to what is great in the character of the Godhead,—no desire whatever after his glory,—no such feeling towards him who is to tabernacle with men, as will qualify him to bear a joyful part in the songs, and the praises of that city which has foundations. Surrounded as he is by the perishable admiration of his fellows, he is altogether out of affection, and out of acquaintance, with that Being with whom he has to do; and it will be found, on the great day of the doings, and the deliberations of the judgment-seat, that as he had no relish for God in time, so is he utterly unfit for his presence, or for his friendship in eternity.

It is said of God, that he created man after his own image, and it was upon losing this image that he was cast out of paradise: and ere he can be again admitted, the image that has been lost must again be formed on him. The grand qualification for the society of heaven is, that each of its members be like unto God. In the selfish and sensual society of earth, there is many a feature of resemblance to the Godhead that is most readily dispensed with; and many an individual here obtains applause and toleration among his fellows, though there is not one attribute of the saintly character belonging to him. Let him only fulfil the stipulations of integrity, and smile benignity upon his friends, and render the alacrity of willing and valuable services to those who have never offended him, and on the strength of such performances as these, may he rise to a conspicuous place

in the scale of this world's reputation. But what would have been the sad event to us, had these been the only performances which went to illustrate the character of the Godhead,—had he been a God of whom we could say no more, than that he possessed the one attribute of an unrelenting justice, or even that he went beyond this attribute, in the exercise of kindness to those who loved him, and in acts of beneficence to those who had never offended him? Do we not owe our place and our prospect to the love of God for his enemies? Is it not from the riches of his forbearance and long suffering, that we draw all our enjoyments in time, and all our hopes for eternity? Is it not because, though grieved with sinners every day, he still waits to be gracious; that he holds out to us, his heedless and wayward children, the beseeching voice of reconciliation; and puts on such an aspect of tenderness to those who have not ceased from their birth to vex his Holy Spirit, and to thwart him every hour by the perverseness of their disobedience? This is the godlike attribute on which all the privileges of our fallen race are suspended; and yet against the imitation of which, nature, when urged by the provocations of injustice, rises in such a tumult of strong and impetuous resistance. It is through the putting forth of this attribute, that any redeemed sinners are to be found among the other society of heaven; but into which no member shall be admitted out of this corrupt world, till there be stamped and realized on his own person, that feature of the divinity to which he owes a distinction so exalted. And tell us, ye men who are so jealous of right and of honour, who take sudden fire at every insult and suffer the slightest imagination of another's contempt, or another's unfairness, to chase from your bosom every feeling of complacency;—ye men whom every fancied affront puts into such a turbulence of emotion, and in whom every fancied infringement stirs up the quick and the resentful appetite for justice—how will you stand the rigorous application of that test by which the forgiven of God are ascertained, even that the spirit of forgiveness is in them, and by which it will be pronounced whether you are indeed the children of the highest, and perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect?

But we must hasten to a close, and will, therefore, barely suggest some other matters of self-examination. We ask you, to think of the facility with which you might obtain the approbation of men, without being at all like unto God in the holiness of his character. We ask you to think of the delight which he takes in the contemplation of what is pure, and moral, and righteous. We ask you to think how one great object of his creation, was to diffuse over the face of it a multiplied resemblance of himself,—and that, therefore, however fit you may be for sustaining your part in the alienated community of this world, you are most assuredly unfit for the great and the general assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect,—if unlike unto God who is in the midst of them, you have no congenial delight with the Father of all, in the contemplation of spiritual excellence. Now, are you not blind to the glories and the perfections of that Being who realizes this excellence to a degree that is infinite? Does not the creature fill up all your avenues of enjoyment, while the Creator is forgotten? In reference to God, is there not an utter dullness and insensibility of all your regards to him? If thus blind to the perception of that supreme virtue and loveliness which reside in the Godhead, are you not, in fact, and by nature an outcast from the Godhead? And an outcast will you ever remain, until your character be brought under some mighty revolutionizing influence which is able to shift the currency of your desires, and to over-rule nature with all her obstinate habits, and all her fond and favorite predilections.

These are topics of great weight and great pregnancy; but we leave them to your own thoughts, and only ask you at present to look at the vivid illustration of them that may be gathered out of the history of Job. In reference to his fellows, he could make a triumphant appeal to the honour and the humanity which adorned him,—he could speak of the splendid career of beneficence that he had run,—and in the recollection of the plaudits that had surrounded him, he could boldly challenge the inspection of all his neighbours, and of all his enemies, on the whole tract of his visible history in the world. He protested his innocence before them, and even so long as he had only

heard of God by the hearing of the ear did he address him in the language of justification. But when God at length revealed himself,—when the worth and the majesty of the Eternal stood before him in visible array,—when the actual presence of his Maker brought the claims of his Maker to bear impressively upon his conscience, it was not merely the presence of the power of God which overawed him; it was the presence of the righteousness of God which convinced him,—and when, from the bright assemblage of all that was pure, and holy, and graceful in the aspect of the Divinity, he turned the eye of contemplation downward upon himself,—O it is instructive to be told, how the vaunting patriarch shrunk into all the depths of self-abasement at so striking a manifestation; and how he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and in ashes."

It is indeed a small matter to be judged of man's judgment. He who judges us is God. From this judgment there is no escape, and no hiding place. The testimony of our fellows will as little avail us in the day of judgment, as the help of our fellows will avail us in the hour of death.

We may as well think of seeking a refuge in the applause of men, from the condemnation of God, as we may think of seeking a refuge in the power or the skill of men, from the mandate of God, that our breath shall depart from us. And, have you never thought, when called to the chamber of the dying man,—when you saw the warning of death upon his countenance, and how its symptoms gathered and grew, and got the ascendency over all the ministrations of human care and of human tenderness,—when it every day became more visible, that the patient was drawing to his close, and that nothing in the whole compass of art or any of its resources, could stay the advances of the sure and the last malady,—have you never thought, on seeing the bed of the sufferer surrounded by other comforters than those of the Patriarch,—when, from morning to night, and from night to morning, the watchful family sat at his couch, and guarded his broken slumbers, and interpreted all his signals, and tried to hide from his observation the tears which attested him

to be the kindest of parents,—when the sad anticipation spread its gloomy stillness over the household, and even sent forth an air of seriousness and concern upon the men of other families, —when you have witnessed the despair of friends, who could only turn them to cry at the spectacle of his last agonies, and had seen how little it was that weeping children and inquiring neighbours could do for him,—when you have contrasted the unrelenting necessity of the grave, with the feebleness of every surrounding endeavour to ward it, has the thought never entered within you? How powerless is the desire of man!—how sure and how resistless is the decree of God!

And on the day of the second death, will it be found, that it is not the imagination of man, but the sentence of God that shall stand. When the sound of the last trumpet awakens us from the grave, and the ensigns of the last day are seen on the canopy of heaven, and the tremor of the dissolving elements is felt upon earth, and the Son of God with his mighty angels are placed around the judgment-seat, and the men of all ages and of all nations are standing before it, and waiting the high decree of eternity,—then will it be found, that as no power of man can save his fellow from going down to the grave of mortality, so no testimony of man can save his fellow from going down to the pit of condemnation. Each on that day will mourn apart. Each of those on the left hand, engrossed by his own separate contemplation, and overwhelmed by the dark and the louring futurity of his own existence, will not have a thought or a sympathy to spare for those who are around him. Each of those on the right hand will see and acquiesce in the righteousness of God, and be made to acknowledge, that those things which are highly esteemed among men are in his sight an abomination. When the Judge and his attendants shall come on the high errand of this world's destinies they will come from God,—and the pure principle they shall bring along with them from the sanctuary of heaven, will be the entire subordination of the thing formed to him who formed it. In that praise which upon earthly feelings the creatures offer one to another, we behold no recognition of this principle whatever; and therefore it is, that it is so very different from the praise which cometh

from God only. And should any one of these creatures be made on that great day of manifestation, to see his nakedness, —should the question, what have you done unto me? leave him speechless; should at length, convicted of his utter rebelliousness against God, he try to find among the companions of his pilgrimage, some attestation to the kindliness that beamed from him upon his fellow mortals in the world,—they will not be able to hide him from the coming wrath. In the face of all the tenderness they ever bore him, the severity of an unreconciled lawgiver must have upon him its resistless operation. They may all bear witness to the honour and the generosity of his doings among men, but there is not one of them who can justify him before God. Nor among all those who now yield him a ready testimony on earth will he find a day's-man betwixt him and his Creator, who can lay his hand upon them both.

SERMON VI.

THE NECESSITY OF A MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

JOB IX. 33.

"Neither is there any day's-man betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both."

IV. THE feeling of Job, at the time of his uttering the complaint which is recorded in the verses before us, might not have been altogether free of a reproachful spirit towards those friends who had refused to advocate his cause, and who had even added bitterness to his distress by their most painful and unwelcome arguments. And well may it be our feeling, and that too without the presence of any such ingredient along with it—that there is not a man upon earth who can execute the office of a day's-man betwixt us and God,—that taking the common sense of this term, there is none who can act as an umpire between us the children of ungodliness, and the Lawgiver, whom we have so deeply offended; or taking up the term that occurs in the Septuagint version of the Bible, that amongst all our brethren of the species, not an individual is to be found who, standing in the place of a mediator, can lay his hand upon us both. It is indeed, very possible, that all this may carry the understanding, and at the same time have all the inefficiency of a cold and general speculation. But should the Spirit, whose office it is to convince us of sin, lend the power of his demonstration to the argument,—should he divide asunder our thoughts, and enable us to see that, with the goodly semblance of what is fair and estimable in the sight of man, all within us is defection from the principle of loyalty to God,—that while we yield a duty as the members of society, the duty that lies upon us, as

the creatures of the Supreme Being, is, in respect of the spirit of allegiance which gives it all its value, fallen away from, by every one of us,—should this conviction cleave to us like an arrow sticking fast, and work its legitimate influence, in causing us to feel all the worthlessness of our characters, and all the need and danger of our circumstances,—then would the urgency of the case be felt as well as understood by us,—nor should we be long of pressing the inquiry of where is the day's-man betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both?

And, in fact, by putting the Mediator away from you,—by reckoning on a state of safety and acceptance without him, what is the ground upon which, in reference to God, you actually put yourselves? We speak not at present of the danger of persisting in such an attitude of independence, of its being one of those refuges of treachery in which the good man of the world is often to be found,—of its being a state wherein peace, when there is no peace, lulls him by its flatteries unto a deceitful repose. We are not at present saying how ruinous it is to rest a security upon an imposing exterior, when in fact the heart is not right in the sight of God, and while the reproving eye of him, who judgeth, not as man judgeth, is upon him, or how poisonous is the unction that comes upon the soul from those praises which upon the mere exhibition of the social virtues, are rung and circulated through society. But, in addition to the danger, let us insist upon the guilt of thus casting the offered Mediator away from us. It implies, in the most direct possible way, a sentiment of the sufficiency of our own righteousness. It is expressly saying of our obedience, that it is good enough for God. It is presumptuously thinking that what pleases the world may please the Maker of it, even though he himself has declared it to be a world lying in wickedness. There is an aggravation you will perceive in all this which goes beyond the simple infraction of the commandment. It is, after the infraction of it, challenging for some remainder or for some semblance of conformity, the reward and approbation of the God whose law we have dishonoured. It is, after we have braved the attribute of the Almighty's justice, by incurring its condemnation, making an attempt upon the attribute itself, by bringing

it down to the standard of a polluted obedience. It is, after insulting the throne of God's righteousness, embarking in the still deadlier enterprize of demolishing all the stabilities which guard it; and spoiling it of that truth which has pronounced a curse on the children of iniquity,—of that holiness which cannot dwell with evil,—of that unchangeableness which will admit of no compromise with sinners that can violate the honours of the Godhead, or weaken the authority of his government over the universe that he has formed. It is laying those paltry accomplishments which give you a place of distinction among your fellows, before that God of whose throne justice and judgment are the habitation, and calling upon him to connive at all that you want, and to look with complacency on all that you possess. It is to bring to the bar of judgment the poor and the starving samples of virtue which are current enough in a world broken loose from its communion with God, and to defy the inspection upon them of God's eternal Son, and of the angels he brings along with him to witness the righteousness of his decisions. Sin has indeed been the ruin of our nature—but this refusal of the Saviour of sinners lands them in a perdition still deeper and more irrecoverable. It is blindness to the enormity of sin. It is equivalent to a formally announced sentiment on your part that your performances, sinful as they are, and polluted as they are, are good enough for heaven. It is just saying of the offered Saviour, that you do not see the use of him. It is a provoking contempt of mercy; and causing the measure of ordinary guilt to overflow, by heaping the additional blasphemy upon it, of calling upon God to honour it by his rewards, and to look to it with the complacency of his approbation.

We cannot, then, we cannot draw near unto God, by a direct or independent approach to him. And who, in these circumstances, is fit to be the day's-man betwixt you? There is not a fellow-mortal from Adam downward, who has not sins of his own to answer for. There is not one of them who has not the sentence of guilt inscribed upon his own forehead, and who is not arrested by the same unscaled barrier which keeps you at an inaccessible distance from God. There is not one of them whose entrance into the holiest of all would not inflict on

it as great a profanation, as if any of you were to present yourselves before him, who dwelleth there, without a Mediator. There lieth a great gulf between God and the whole of this alienated world; and after looking round amongst all the men of all its generations, we may say, in the language of the text, that there is not a day's-man betwixt us who can lay his hand upon us both.

What we aim at as the effect of all these observations, is, that you should feel your only security to be in the revealed and the offered mediator; that you should seek to him as your only effectual hiding-place; and who alone, in the whole range of universal being, is able to lay his hand upon you, and shield you from the justice of the Almighty, and to lay his hand upon God, and to stay the fury of the avenger. By him the deep atonement has been rendered. By him the mystery has been accomplished, which angels desired to look into. By him such a sacrifice for sin has been offered, as that, in the acceptance of the sinner, every attribute of the Divinity is exalted; and the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, though turned into a throne of grace is, still upheld in all its firmness, and in all its glory. Through the unchangeable priesthood of Christ, the vilest of sinners may draw nigh, and receive of that mercy which has met with truth, and of that peace which is in close alliance with righteousness; and without one perfection of the Godhead being surrendered by this act of forgiveness all are made to receive a higher and more wondrous manifestation; for though he will by no means clear the guilty, yet there is no place for vengeance, when all their guilt is cleared away by the blood of the everlasting covenant; and though he executeth justice upon the earth, yet he can be just while the justifier of them who believe in Jesus.

The work of our redemption is every where spoken of as an achievement of strength—as done by the putting forth of mighty energies—as the work of one who, travelling in his own unaided greatness, had to tread the wine-press alone; and who, when of the people there was none to help him, did by his own arm bring unto him salvation. To move aside the obstacle which beset the path of acceptance; to reinstate the guilty into fa-

vour with the offended and unchangeable Lawgiver: to avert from them the execution of that sentence to which there were staked the truth and justice of the Divinity; to work out a pardon for the disobedient, and at the same time to uphold in all their strength the pillars of that throne which they had insulted; to intercept the defied penalties of the law, and at the same time to magnify it, and to make it honourable; thus to bend, as it were, the holy and everlasting attributes of God, and in doing so, to pour over them the lustre of a high and awful vindication,—this was an enterprize of such height, and depth, and length, as no created being could fulfil, and which called forth the might and the counsel of him who is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

When no man could redeem his neighbour from the grave, —God himself found out a ransom. When not one of the beings whom he had formed could offer an adequate expiation,— did the Lord of hosts awaken the sword of vengeance against his fellow. When there was no messenger among the angels who surrounded his throne, that could both proclaim and purchase peace for a guilty world,—did God manifest in the flesh descend in shrouded majesty amongst our earthly tabernacles, and pour out his soul unto the death for us, and purchase the church by his own blood, and bursting away from the grave which could not hold him, ascend to the throne of his appointed mediatorship; and now he, the first and the last, who was dead and is alive, and maketh intercession for transgressors, is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through him; and standing in the breach between a holy God and the sinners who have offended him, does he make reconciliation, and lay his hand upon them both.

But it is not enough that the Mediator be appointed by God, —he must be accepted by man. And to incite our acceptance does he hold forth every kind and constraining argument. He casts abroad, over the whole face of the world, one wide and universal assurance of welcome. "Whosoever cometh unto me shall not be cast out." "Come unto me all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded." "Whatso-

ever ye ask in my name ye shall receive." The path of access to Christ is open and free of every obstacle, which kept fearful and guilty man at an impracticable distance from the jealous and unpacified Lawgiver. He hath put aside the obstacle, and now stands in its place. Let us only go in the way of the Gospel, and we shall find nothing between us and God but the author and finisher of the Gospel,—who, on the one hand, beckons to him the approach of man, with every token of truth and of tenderness; and, on the other hand, advocates our cause with God, and fills his mouth with arguments, and pleads that very atonement which was devised in love by the Father, and with the incense of which he was well pleased, and claims, as the fruit of the travail of his soul, all who put their trust in him; and thus, laying his hand upon God, turns him altogether from the fierceness of his indignation.

But Jesus Christ is something more than the agent of our justification,—he is the agent of our sanctification also. Standing between us and God, he receives from him of that Spirit which is called the promise of the Father, and he pours it forth in free and generous dispensation on those who believe in him. Without this spirit there may, in a few of the goodlier specimens of our race, be within us the play of what is kindly in constitutional feeling, and without us the exhibition of what is seemly in a constitutional virtue; and man, thus standing over us in judgment, may pass his verdict of approbation; and all that is visible in our doings may be pure as by the operation of snow water. But the utter irreligiousness of our nature will remain as entire and as obstinate as ever. The alienation of our desires from God will persist with unsubdued vigour in our bosoms; and sin, in the very essence of its elementary principle, will still lord it over the inner man with all the power of its original ascendency,—till the deep, and the searching, and the pervading influence of the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the holy Ghost. This is the work of the great Mediator. This is the might and the mystery of that regeneration, without which we shall never see the kingdom of God. This is the office of Him to whom all power is committed, both in heaven and in earth,—who reigning in heaven, and uniting its mer-

cy with its righteousness, causes them to flow upon earth in one stream of celestial influence; and reigning on earth, and working mightily in the hearts of its people, makes them meet for the society of heaven,—thereby completing the wonderful work of our redemption, by which, on the one hand, he brings the eye of a holy God to look approvingly on the sinner, and on the other hand, makes the sinner fit for the fellowship, and altogether prepared for the enjoyment of God.

Such are the great elements of a sinner's religion. But if you turn from the prescribed use of them, the wrath of God abideth on you. If you kiss not the Son while he is in the way, you provoke his anger, and when once it begins to burn, they only are blessed who have put their trust in him. If, on the fancied sufficiency of a righteousness that is without godliness, you neglect the great salvation, you will not escape the severities of that day, when the Being with whom you have to do shall enter with you into judgment; and it is only by fleeing to the Mediator, as you would from a coming storm, that peace is made between you and God, and that, sanctified by the faith which is in Jesus, you are made to abound in such fruits of righteousness, as shall be to praise and glory at the last and the solemn reckoning.

Before we conclude, we shall just advert to another sense, in which the Mediator between God and man may be affirmed to have laid his hand upon them both:—He fills up that mysterious interval which lies between every corporeal being, and the God who is a spirit and is invisible.

No man hath seen God at any time,—and the power which is unseen is terrible. Fancy trembles before its own picture, and superstition throws its darkest imagery over it. The voice of the thunder is awful, but not so awful as the conception of that angry being who sits in mysterious concealment, and gives it all its energy. In these sketches of the imagination, fear is sure to predominate. We gather an impression of Nature's God, from those scenes where Nature threatens, and looks dreadful. We speak not of the theology of the schools, and the empty parade of its demonstrations. We speak of the theology of actual feeling,—that theology which is sure to derive its lessons from the quarter whence the human heart derives its

strongest sensations,—and we refer both to your own feelings, and to the history of this world's opinions, if God is more felt or more present to your imaginations in the peacefulness of spring, or the loveliness of a summer landscape, than when winter with its mighty elements sweeps the forest of its leaves, —when the rushing of the storm is heard upon our windows, and man flees to cover himself from the desolation that walketh over the surface of the world.

If nature and her elements be dreadful, how dreadful that mysterious and unseen Being, who sits behind the elements he has formed, and gives birth and movement to all things! It is the mystery in which he is shrouded,—it is that dark and unknown region of spirits, where he reigns in glory, and stands revealed to the immediate view of his worshippers,—it is the inexplicable manner of his being so far removed from that province of sense, within which the understanding of man can expatiate,—it is its total unlikeness to all that nature can furnish to the eye of the body, or to the conception of the mind, which animates it,—it is all this which throws the Being who formed us at a distance so inaccessible,—which throws an impenetrable mantle over his way, and gives us the idea of some dark and untrodden interval betwixt the glory of God, and all that is visible and created.

Now, Jesus Christ has lifted up this mysterious veil, or rather he has entered within it. He is now at the right hand of God; and though the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, he appeared to us in the palpable characters of a man; and those high attributes of truth, and justice, and mercy, which could not be felt or understood, as they existed in the abstract and invisible Deity, are brought down to our conceptions in a manner the most familiar and impressive, by having been made, through Jesus Christ, to flow in utterance from human lips, and to beam in expressive physiognomy from a human countenance.

So long as I had nothing before me but the unseen spirit of God, my mind wandered in uncertainty, my busy fancy was free to expatiate, and its images filled my heart with disquietude and terror. But in the life, and person, and history of

Jesus Christ, the attributes of the Deity are brought down to the observation of the senses; and I can no longer mistake them, when in the Son, who is the express image of his Father, I see them carried home to my understanding by the evidence and expression of human organs,—when I see the kindness of the Father, in the tears which fell from his Son at the tomb of Lazarus,—when I see his justice blended with his mercy, in the exclamation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," by Jesus Christ; uttered with a tone more tender than the sympathy of human bosom ever prompted while he bewailed the sentence of its desolation,—and in the look of energy and significance which he threw upon Peter, I feel the judgment of God himself, flashing conviction upon my conscience, and calling me to repent while his wrath is suspended, and he still waiteth to be gracious.

And it was not a temporary character which he assumed. The human kindness, and the human expression which makes it intelligible to us, remained with him till his latest hour. They survived his resurrection, and he has carried them along with him to the mysterious place which he now occupies. How do I know all this? I know it from his history; I hear it in the parting words to his mother from the cross; I see it in his unaltered form when he rose triumphant from the grave; I perceive it in his tenderness for the scruples of the unbelieving Thomas; and I am given to understand, that as his body retained the impression of his own sufferings, so his mind retains a sympathy for ours, as warm, and gracious, and endearing, as ever. We have a Priest on high, who is touched with a fellow feeling of our infirmities. My soul, unable to support itself in its aerial flight among the spirits of the invisible, now reposes on Christ, who stands revealed to my conceptions in the figure, the countenance, the heart, the sympathies of a man. He has entered within that veil which hung over the glories of the Eternal; and the mysterious inaccessible throne of God is divested of all its terrors, when I think that a friend who bears the form of the species, and knows its infirmities, is there to plead for me.

SERMON VII.

THE FOLLY OF MEN MEASURING THEMSELVES BY THEMSELVES.

2 CORINTHIANS X. 12.

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

St. Paul addressed these words to the members of a Christian congregation; and were we to confine their application to those people of the present day, who in circumstances, bear the nearest resemblance to them, we would, in the present discourse, have chiefly to do with the more serious and declared professors of the Gospel. Nor should we be long at a loss for a very observable peculiarity amongst them, against which to point the admonition of the Apostle. For, in truth there is a great disposition with the members of the religious world, to look away from the unalterable standard of God's will, and to form a standard of authority out of the existing attainments of those whom they conceive to be in the faith. We know nothing that has contributed more than this to reduce the tone of practical Christianity. We know not a more insidious security, than that which steals over the mind of him who when he looks to another of eminent name for godliness, or orthodoxy, and perceives in him a certain degree of conformity to the world, or a certain measure of infirmity of temper, or a certain abandonment of himself to the natural enjoyments of luxury, or of idle gossiping, or of commenting with malignant pleasure on the faults and failings of the absent, thinks, that upon such an example, it is safe for

him to allow in himself an equal extent of indulgence; and to go the same lengths of laxity or transgression; and thus, instead of measuring himself by the perfect law of the Almighty, and making conformity to it the object of his strenuous aspirings,—does he measure himself and compare himself with his fellow-mortals,—and pitches his ambition to no greater height than the accidental level which obtains amongst the members of his own religious brotherhood, and finds a quiet repose in the mediocrity of their actual accomplishments, and of their current and conventional observations.

There is much in this consideration to alarm many of those who within the pale of a select and peculiar circle, look upon themselves as firmly seated in an enclosure of safety. They may he recognized by the society around them, as one of us; and they may keep the even pace of acquirement along with them; and they may wear all those marks of distinction which separate them from the general and unprofessing public; and, in respect of Church, and of sacrament, and of family observances, and of exclusive preference for each other's conversation, and of meetings for prayer and the other exercises of Christian fellowship, they may stand most decidedly out from the world, and most decidedly in with those of their own cast and their own denomination;—and yet, in fact, there may be individuals, even, of such a body as this, who, instead of looking upwards to the Being with whom they have to do, are looking no farther than to the testimony and example of those who are immediately around them; who count it enough that they are highly esteemed among men; who feel no earnestness, and put forth no strength in the pursuit of a lofty sanctification; who are not living as in the sight of God, and are not in the habit of bringing their conduct into measurement with the principles of that great day, when God's righteousness shall be vindicated in the eyes of all his creatures; who, satisfied, in short, with the countenance of the people of their own communion, come under the charge of my text that measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, they are not wise.

Now, though this habit of measuring ourselves by oursevles,

and comparing ourselves among ourselves, be charged by the Apostle, in the text, against the professors of a strict and peculiar Christianity; it is a habit so universally exemplified in the world, and ministers such a deep and fatal security to the men of all characters who live in it, and establishes in their hearts so firm a principle of resistance against the humbling doctrines of the New Testament, that we trust we shall be excused if we leave out, for a time, the consideration of those who are within the limits of the Church, and dwell on the operation of this habit among those who are without these limits; and going beyond that territory of observation to which the words now read would appear to restrict us, we shall attend to the effects of that principle in human nature which are there adverted to, in as far as it serves to fortify the human mind against an entire reception of the truths and the overtures of the Gospel.

It may be remarked, by way of illustration, that the habit condemned in the text is an abundant cause of that vanity which is founded on a sense of our importance. If, instead of measuring ourselves by our companions and equals in society, we brought ourselves into measurement with our superiors, it might go far to humble and chastise our vanity. The rustic conqueror on some arena of strength or of dexterity, stands proudly elevated among his fellow-rustics who are around him. Place him beside the returned warrior, who can tell of the hazards, and the achievements, and the desperations of the great battle in which he had shared the renown and the danger; and he will stand convicted of the humility of his own performances. The man who is most keen, and, at the same time, most skilful in the busy politics of his corporation, triumphs in the consciousness of that sagacity by which he has baffled and overpowered the devices of his many antagonists. But take him to the high theatre of Parliament, and bring him into fellowship with the man who has there won the mighty game of superiority, and he will feel abashed at the insignificance of his own tamer and homelier pretensions. The richest individual of the district struts throughout his neighbourhood in all the glories of a provincial eminence. Carry him to the metropolis of the empire, and he hides his diminished head under the brilliancy of rank

far loftier than his own, and equipage more splended than that by which he gathers from his surrounding tributaries, the homage of a respectful admiration. The principle of all this vanity was seen by the discerning eye of the Apostle. It is put down for our instruction in the text before us. And if we, instead of looking to our superiority above the level of our immediate acquaintanceship, pointed an eye of habitual observation to our inferiority beneath the level of those in society who were more dignified and more accomplished than ourselves,—such a habit as this might shed a graceful humility over our characters, and save us from the pangs and the delusions of a vanity which was not made for man.

And let it not be said of those, who, in the more exalted walks of life, can look to few or to none above them, that they can derive no benefit from the principle of my text, because they are placed beyond the reach of its application. It is true of him who is on the very pinnacle of human society, that standing sublimely there, he can cast a downward eye on all the ranks and varieties of the world. But, though in the act of looking beneath him to men, he may gather no salutary lesson of humility,—the lesson should come as forcibly upon him as upon any of his fellow mortals, in the act of looking above him to God. Instead of comparing himself with the men of this world, let him leave the world and expatiate in thought over the tracts of immensity,—let him survey the mighty apparatus of worlds scattered in such profusion over its distant regions; let him bring the whole field of the triumphs of his ambition into measurement with the magnificence that is above him, and around him,—above all, let him rise through the ascending series of angels, and principalities, and powers, to the throne of the august Monarch on whom all is suspended,—and then will the lofty imagination of his heart be cast down, and all vanity die within him.

Now, if all this be obviously true of that vanity which is founded on a sense of our importance, might it not be as true of that complacency which is founded on a sense of our worth? Should it not lead us to suspect the ground of this complacency, and to fear lest a similar delusion be misleading us into a false estimate of our own righteousness? When we feel a sufficiency in the

act of measuring ourselves by ourselves, and comparing ourselves among ourselves, is it not the average virtue of those around us that is the standard of measurement? Do we not at the time, form our estimate of human worth upon the character of man as it actually is, instead of forming it upon the high standard of that pure and exalted law which tells us what the character ought to be? Is it not thus that many are lulled into security, because they are as good or better than their neighbours? This may do for earth, but the question we want to press is, will it do for Heaven? It may carry us through life with a fair and equal character in society, and even when we come to die, it may gain us an epitaph upon our tombstones. But after death cometh the judgment; and in that awful day judgment is laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet, every refuge of lies will be swept away, and every hiding-place of security be laid open.

Under the influence of this delusion, thousands and tens of thousands are posting their infatuated way to a ruined and undone eternity. The good man of society lives on the applause and cordiality of his neighbours. He compares himself with his fellow-men; and their testimony to the graces of his amiable, and upright, and honourable character, falls like the music of paradise upon his ears. And it were also the earnest of paradise, if these his flatterers and admirers in time were to be his judges in the day of reckoning. But, alas! they will only be his fellow-prisoners at the bar. The eternal Son of God will preside over the solemnities of that day. He will take the judgment upon himself, and he will conduct it on his own lofty standard of examination, and not on the maxims or the habits of a world lying in wickedness. O ye deluded men! who carry your heads so high, and look so safe and so satisfied amid the smooth and equal measurements of society,—do you ever think how you are to stand the admeasurement of Christ and of his angels? and think you that the fleeting applause of mortals, sinful as yourselves, will carry an authority over the mind of your judge, or prescribe to him that solemn award which is to fix you for eternity?

In the prosecution of the following discourse, let us first at-

tempt to expose the folly of measuring ourselves by ourselves, and comparing ourselves amongst ourselves; and then point out the wisdom opposite to this folly, which is recommended in the gospel.

I. The folly of measuring ourselves by ourselves is a lesson which admits of many illustrations. The habit is so universal. It is so strikingly exemplified, even among the most acknowledged outcasts from all that is worthy, and all that is respectable in general estimation. There is not a congregated mass of human beings, associated in one common pursuit, or brought together by one common accident, among whom there is not established either some tacit or proclaimed morality, to the observance of which, or to the violation of which, there is awarded admiration or disgrace, by the voice of the society that is formed by them. You cannot bring two or more human beings to act in concert without some conventional principle of right and wrong arising out of it, which either must be practically held in regard, or the concert is dissipated. And yet it may be altogether a concert of iniquity. It may be a concert of villany and injustice against the larger interests of human society. It may be a banded conspiracy against the peace and the property of the commonwealth; and there may not be a member belonging to it who does not carry the stamp of outlawry upon his person, and who is not liable, and rightly liable, to the penalties of an outraged government, against which he is bidding, by the whole habit of his life, a daily and systematic defiance. And yet even among such a class of the species as this, an enlightened observer of our nature will not fail to perceive a standard of morality, both recognized and acted upon by all its individuals, and in reference to which morality, there actually stirs in many a bosom amongst them a very warm and enthusiastic feeling of obligation,—and some will you find, who, by their devoted adherence to its maxims, earn among their companions all the distinctions of honour and of virtue,—and others who, by falling away from the principles of the compact, become the victims of a deep and general execration. And thus may the very same thing be perceived with them, that we see in the more general society of mankind—a scale of character, and

corresponding to it, a scale of respectability, along which the members of the most wicked and worthless association upon earth may be ranged according to the gradation of such virtues as are there held in demand, and in reverence; and thus there will be a feeling of complacency, and a distribution of applause, and a conscious superiority of moral and personal attainment, and all this grounded on the habit of measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves.

The first case of such an exhibition which we offer to your notice, comes so aptly in for the purpose of illustration, that homely and familiar as it is, we cannot resist the introduction of it. We allude to the case of smugglers. These men, in as far at least as it respects one tie of allegiance, may be considered as completely broken loose from the government of their country. They have formed themselves into a plot against the interests of the public revenue, and it may be generally said of them, that they have no feeling whatever of the criminality of their undertaking. On this point there is utterly wanting the sympathy of any common principle between the administrators of the law and the transgressors of the law,—and yet it would be altogether untrue to nature and to experience to say of the latter, that they are entire strangers to the feeling of every moral obligation. They have a very strong sense of obligation to each other. There are virtues amongst them which serve to signalize certain members, and vices amongst them which doom to infamy certain other members of their own association. In reference to the duties which they owe to government, they may be dead to every impression of them. But in reference to those duties, on the punctual fulfilment of which depends the success, or even the continuance, of their system of operations, they may be most keenly and sensitively alive. They may speak of the informer who has abandoned them, with all the intensity of moral hatred and contempt; and of the man, again, who never once swerved from his fidelity; of the man, who, with all the notable dexterity of his evasions from the vigilance that was sent forth to track and to discover him, was ever known to be open as day amongst the members of his own brotherhood; of the man, who, with the unprincipledness of a most

skilful and systematic falsehood, in reference to the agents and pursuers of the law, was the most trusty, and the most incorruptible, in reference to his fellows of the trade; of the man who stands highest amongst them in all the virtues of pledged and sworn companionship;—why, of such a man will these roving mountaineers speak in terms of honest and heartfelt veneration; and nothing more is necessary, in order to throw a kind of chivalric splendour over him, than just to be told, along with his inflexible devotedness to the cause, of his hardy adventures, and his hair-breadth miracles of escape, and his inexhaustible resources, and of the rapidity of his ever-suiting and ever-shifting contrivances, and of his noble and unquelled spirit of daring, and of the art and activity by which he has eluded his opponents, and of the unfaltering courage by which he has resisted them. We doubt not, that even in the history of this ignominious traffic, there do occur such deeds and characters, of unrecorded heroism; and still the men who carry it on, measuring themselves by themselves, may never think of the ignominy. They will enjoy the praise they have one of another, and care not for the distant blame that is cast upon them by the public voice. They will carry in their bosoms the swelling consciousness of worth, and be regaled by the home testimony of those who are about them; and all this at the very time when, to the general community, they offer a spectacle of odiousness; all this at the very time, when the power and the justice of an incensed government are moving forth upon them.

But another case still more picturesque, and, what is far better, still more subservient to the establishment of the lesson of our text, may be taken from another set of adventurers, hardier, and more ferocious, and more unprincipled than the former. We allude to the men of rapine; and who, rather than that their schemes of rapine should be frustrated, have so far overcome all the scruples and all the sensibilities of nature, that they have become men of blood. They live as commoners upon the world; and at large from those restraints, whether of feeling or of principle, which hold in security together the vast majority of this world's families, they are looked at by general society with a revolting sense of terror and of odiousness. And

yet, among these monsters of the cavern, and practised as they are in all the atrocities of the highway, will you find a virtue of their own, and a high-toned morality of their own. Living as they do, in a state of emancipation from the law universal, still there is among them a law isoterical, in doing homage to which, the hearts of these banditti actually glow with the movements of honourable principle; and the path of their conduct is actually made to square with the conformities of right and honourable practice. Extraordinary as you may think it, the very habit of my text is in full operation among these very men, who have wandered so far from all that is deemed righteous in society; and disowning, as they do, our standard of principle altogether, they have a standard among themselves, on which they can adjust a scale of moral estimation, and apply in it every exercise of judgment on the character of each individual who belongs to them. In reference to every deviation that is made by them from the general standard of right, there is an entire obliteration of all their sensibilities,—and this is not the ground on which they ever think either of reproaching themselves, or of casting any imputation of disgrace on their companions. But, in reference to their own particular standard of right, they are all awake to the enormity of every act of transgression against it,—and thus it is, that measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves, there is just with them as varied a distribution of praise and of obloquy as is to be met with on the face of any regular and well-ordered commonwealth. And who, we would ask, is the man among all these prowling outcasts of nature, on whom the law of his country would inflict the most unrelenting vengeance? He who is most signalized by the moralities of his order,—he who has gained by fidelity, and courage, and disinterested honour, the chieftianship of confidence and affection amongst them,—he the foremost of all the desperadoes, on whose character perhaps the romance of generosity and truth is strangely blended with the stern barbarities of his calling,—and who, the most admired among the members of his own brotherhood, is, at the same time, the surest to bring down upon his person all the rigours and all the severities of the judgment-seat.

Let us now follow with the eye of our observation, a number of these transgressors into another scene. Let us go into the place of their confinement; and, in this receptacle of many criminals, with all their varied hues of guilt and of depravity, we shall perceive the habit of my text in full and striking exemplification. The murderer stands lower in the scale of character than the thief. The first is worse than the second—and you have only to reverse the terms of the comparison, that you may be enabled to say how the second is better than the first. Thus, even in this repository of human worthlessness, we meet with gradations of character; with the worse and the better and the best; with an ascending and a descending scale, which runs in continuity, from the one who stands upon its pinnacle, to the one who is the deepest and most determined in wickedness amongst them. It is utter ignorance of our nature to conceive that this moral gradation is not fully and frequently in the minds of the criminals themselves,—that there is not, even here, the habit of each measuring himself with his fellow-prisoners around him, and of some soothed by the consciousness of a more untainted character, and rejoicing over it with a feeling of secret elevation. They, in truth, know themselves to be the best of their kind,—and this knowledge brings a complacency along with it,—and, even in this mass of profligacy, there swells and kindles the pride of superior attainments. But there is at least one delusion from which one and all of them stand exempted. The very best of them, however much he may be regaled by the inward sense of his advantage over others, knows, that in reference to the law, he is not on a footing of merit, but on a footing of criminality,—knows, that though he will be the most gently dealt with, and that on him the lightest penalty will fall, yet still he stands to his judge and to his country, in the relation of a condemned malefactor—feels, how preposterous it were, if, on the plea of being the most innocent of the whole assemblage, he was to claim, not merely exemption from punishment, but the reward of some high and honourable distinction at the hands of the magistrate. He is fully aware of the gap that lies between him and the administrators of justice,—is sensible, that though he deserves to be beaten with fewer stripes

than others, yet still, that, in the eye of the law, he deserves to be beaten; and that he stands at as hopeless a distance, as the most depraved of his fellows, from a sentence of complete justification.

Let us, last of all, go along with these malefactors to the scene of their banishment. Let us view them as the members of a separated community; and we shall widely mistake it, if we think, that in this settlement of New South Wales, there is not the same shading of moral variety, there is not the same gradation of character, there is not the same scale of reputation, there is not the same distribution of respect, there is not the same pride of loftier principle, and debasement of more shameful and abandoned profligacy, there is not the same triumph of conscious superiority on the one hand, and the same crouching sense of unworthiness on the other, which you find in the more decent, and virtuous, and orderly society of Europe.

Within the limits of this colony there exists a tribunal of public opinion, from which praise and popularity, and reproach, are awarded in various proportions among all the inhabitants. And without the limits of this colony there exists another tribunal of public opinion, by the voice of which an unexpected stigma of exclusion and disgrace is cast upon every one of them. Insomuch, that the same individual may by a nearer judgment, be extolled as the best and the most distinguished of all who are around him,—and by a more distant judgment, he may have all the ignominy of an outcast laid upon his person and his character. He may, at one and the same time, be regaled by the applause of one society, and held in rightful execration by another society. In the former, he may have the deference of a positive regard rendered to him for his virtues,—while, from the latter, he is justly exiled by the hateful contamination of his vices. And in him do we behold the instructive picture of a man, who, at the bar of his own neighbourhood, stands the highest in moral estimation,—while, at a higher bar, he has had a mark of foulest ignominy stamped upon him.

We want not to shock the pride or the delicacy of your feelings. But, on a question so high as that of your eternity, we

want to extricate you from the power of every vain and bewildering delusion. We want to urge upon you the lesson of Scripture, that this world differs from a prison house, only in its being a more spacious receptacle of sinners,—and that there is not a wider distance, in point of habit and of judgment, between a society of convicts, and the general community of mankind, than there is between the whole community of our species, and the society of that paradise, from which, under the apostacy of our fallen nature, we have been doomed to live in dreary alienation. We refuse not to the men of our world the possession of many high and honourable virtues; but let us not forget, that amongst the marauders of the highway, we hear too, of inflexible faith, and devoted friendship, and splendid generosity. We deny not, that there exists among our species, as much truth and as much honesty, as serve to keep society together: but a measure of the very same principle is necessary, in order to perpetuate and to accomplish the end of the most unrighteous combinations. We deny not, that there flourishes on the face of our earth a moral diversity of hue and of character, and that there are the better and the best who have signalized themselves above the level of its general population; but so it is in the malefactor's dungeon, and as there, so here, may a positive sentence of condemnation be the lot of the most exalted individual. We deny not, that there are many in every neighbourhood, to whose character, and whose worth, the cordial tribute of admiration is awarded; but the very same thing may be witnessed amongst the outcasts of every civilized territory,—and what they are, in reference to the country from which they have been exiled, we may be, in reference to the whole of God's unfallen creation. In the sight of men we may be highly esteemed,—and we may be an abomination in the sight of angels. We may receive homage from our immediate neighbours for all the virtues of our relationship with them,—while our relationship with God may be utterly dissolved, and its appropriate virtues may neither be recognized nor acted on. There may emanate from our persons a certain beauteousness of moral colouring on those who are around us,—but when seen through the universal morality of God's extended

and all-pervading government, we may look as hateful as the outcasts of felony,—and living, as we do, in a rebellious province, that has broken loose from the community of God's loyal and obedient worshippers, we may, at one and the same time, be surrounded by the cordialities of an approving fellowship, and be frowned upon by the supreme judicatory of the universe. At one and the same time, we may be regaled by the incense of this world's praise, and be the objects of Heaven's most righteous execration.

But is this the real place, it may be asked, that our world occupies in the moral universe of God? The answer to this question may be obtained either out of the historical informations of Scripture, or out of a survey that may be made of the actual character of man, and a comparison that may be instituted between this character and the divine law. We can conceive nothing more uniform and more decisive than the testimony of the Bible, when it tells us that however fair some may be in the eyes of men, yet that all are guilty before God; that in his eyes none are righteous, no not one: that he, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, finds out iniquity in every one of us; that there is none who understandeth, and none who seeketh after God; that however much we may compare ourselves amongst ourselves, and found a complacency upon the exercise, yet that we have altogether gone out of the way; that however distinctly we may retain, even in the midst of this great moral rebellion, our relative superiorities over each other, there is a wide and a general departure of the species from God; that one and all of us have deeply revolted against him: that the taint of a most inveterate spiritual disease has overspread all the individuals of all the families upon earth; insomuch, that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and the imaginations of his thoughts are only evil, and that continually.

The fall of Adam is represented, in the Bible, as that terribly decisive event, on which took place this deep and fatal unhingement of the moral constitution of our species. From this period the malady has descended, and the whole history of our world gives evidence to its state of banishment from the joys

and the communications of paradise. Before the entrance of sin did God and man walk in sweet companionship together, and saw each other face to face in the security of a garden. A little further down in the history, we meet with another of God's recorded manifestations. We read of his descent in thunder upon mount Sinai. O what a change from the free and fearless intercourse of Eden! God, though surrounded by a people whom he had himself selected, here sits, if we may use the expression, on a throne of awful and distant ceremony; and the lifting of his mighty voice scattered dismay among the thousands of Israel. When he looked now on the children of men, he looked at them with an altered countenance. The days were, when they talked together in the lovely scenes of paradise as one talketh with a friend. But, on the top of Sinai, he wraps himself in storms, and orders to set bounds about the mount, lest the people should draw near, and God should break forth upon them.

But we have an evidence to our state of banishment from God, which is nearer home. We have it in our own hearts. The habitual attitude of the inner man is not an attitude of subordination to God. The feeling of allegiance to him is practically and almost constantly away from us. All that can give value to our obedience, in the sight of an enlightened Spirit who looks to motive, and sentiment, and principle has constitutionally no place, and no residence in our characters. We are engrossed by other anxieties than anxiety to do the will, and to promote the honour, of him who formed us. We are animated by other affections altogether, than love to him, whose right hand preserves us continually. That Being by whom we are so fearfully and wonderfully made; whose upholding presence it is that keeps us in life, and in movement, and in the exercise of all our faculties; who has placed us on the theatre of all our enjoyments, and claims over his own creatures the ascendency of a most rightful authority;—that surely is the Being with whom we have to do. And yet, when we take account of our thoughts and of our doings, how little of God is there? In the random play and exhibition of such feelings as instinctively belong to us, we may gather around us the admiration of our fel-

lows,—and so it is in a colony of exiled criminals. But as much wanting there, as is the homage of loyalty to the government of their native land; so much wanting here, is the homage of any deference or inward regard, to the government of Heaven. And yet this is the very principle of all that obedience which Heaven can look upon. If it be true that obedience is rewardable by God, but that which has respect unto God, then this must be the essential point on which hinges the difference between a rebel, and a royal subject to the supreme Lawgiver. The requirement we live under is to do all things to his glory; and this is the measure of principle and of performance that will be set over you,—and tell us, ye men of civil and relative propriety, who, by exemplifying in the eye of your fellows such virtue, as may be exemplified by the outcasts of banishment, have shed around your persons the tiny lustre of this world's moralities; tell us how you will be able to stand such a severe and righteous application? The measure by which we compare ourselves with ourselves, is not the measure of the sanctuary. When the judge comes to take account of us, he will come fraught with the maxims of a celestial jurisprudence, and his question will be, not, what have you done at the shrine of popularity,—not, what have you done to sustain a character amongst men,—not, what have you done at the mere impulse of sensibilities however amiable, or of native principles however upright, and elevated, and manly,—but what have you done unto me? how much of God, and of God's will, was there in the principle of your doings? This is the heavenly measure, and it will set aside all your earthly measures and comparisons. It will sweep away all these refuges of lies. The man whose accomplishments of character, however lively, were all social, and worldly, and relative, will hang his head in confusion when the utter wickedness of his pretensions is thus laid open,—when the God who gave him every breath, and endowed him with every faculty, enquires after his share of reverence and acknowledgment,—when he tells him from the judgment-seat, I was the Being with whom you had to do and yet in the vast multiplicity of your doings, I was seldom or never thought of, —when he convicts him of habitual forgetfulness of God, and

setting aside all the paltry measurements which men apply in their estimates of one another, he brings the high standard of Heaven's law, and Heaven's allegiance to bear upon them.

It must be quite palpable to any man who has seen much of life, and still more if he has travelled extensively, and witnessed the varied complexions of morality that obtain in distant societies,—it must be quite obvious to such a man, how readily the moral feeling, in each of them, accommodates itself to the general state of practice and observation,—that the practices of one country, for which there is a most complacent toleration, would be shuddered at as so many atrocities in another country,—that in every given neighbourhood, the sense of right and of wrong, becomes just as fine or as obtuse as to square with its average purity, and its average humanity, and its average uprightness,—that what would revolt the public feeling of a retired parish in Scotland as gross licentiousness or outrageous cruelty, might attach no disgrace whatever to a residenter in some colonial settlement,—that, nevertheless, in the more corrupt and degraded of the two communities, there is a scale of differences, a range of character, along which are placed the comparative stations of the disreputable, and the passable, and the respectable, and the superexcellent; and yet it is a very possible thing, that if a man in the last of these stations were to import all his habits and all his profligacies into his native land, superexcellent as he may be abroad, at home he would be banished from the general association of virtuous and well ordered families. Now, all we ask of you is, to transfer this consideration to the matter before us,—to think how possible a thing it is, that the moral principle of the world at large, may have sunk to a peaceable and approving acquiescence in the existing practice of the world at large,—that the security which is inspired by the habit of measuring ourselves by ourselves, and comparing ourselves amongst ourselves, may therefore be a delusion altogether,—that the very best member of society upon earth, may be utterly unfit for the society of heaven,—that the morality which is current here, may depend upon totally another set of principles from the morality which is held to be indispensable there;—and when we gather these princi-

ples from the book of God's revelation,—when we are told that the law of the two great commandments is, to love the Lord our God with all our strength, and heart, and mind, and to bear the same love to our neighbour that we do to ourselves,—the argument advances from a conjecture to a certainty, that every inhabitant of earth when brought to the bar of Heaven's judicature, is altogether wanting; and that unless some great moral renovation take effect upon him, he can never be admitted within the limits of the empire of righteousness.

SERMON VIII.

CHRIST THE WISDOM OF GOD.

1 CORINTHIANS i. 24.

"Christ the wisdom of God."

We cannot but remark of the Bible, how uniformly and how decisively it announces itself in all its descriptions of the state and character of man,—how, without offering to palliate the matter, it brings before us the totality of our alienation,—how it represents us to be altogether broken off from our allegiance to God,—and how it fears not, in the face of those undoubted diversities of character which exist in the world, to assert of the whole world, that it is guilty before him. And if we would only seize on what may be called the elementary principle of guilt,—if we would only take it along with us, that guilt, in reference to God, must consist in the defection of our regard, and our reverence from him,—if we would only open our eyes to the undoubted fact, that there may be such an utter defection, and yet there may be many an amiable, and many a graceful exhibition, both of feeling and of conduct, in reference to those who are around us,—then should we recognize, in the statements of the Bible, a vigorous, discerning, and intelligent view of human nature,—an unfaltering announcement of what that nature essentially is, under all the plausibilities which serve to disguise it,—and such an insight, in fact, into the secrecies of our inner man, as if carried home by that Spirit, whose office it is to apply the word with power into the conscience, is enough, of itself, to stamp upon this book, the evidence of the Divinity which inspired it.

But it is easier far to put an end to the resistance of the understanding, than to alarm the fears, or to make the heart soft and tender, under a sense of its guiltiness, or to prompt the inquiry,—if all those securities, within the entrenchment of which I want to take my quiet and complacent repose, are thus driven in, where in the whole compass of nature or revelation can any effectual security be found? It may be easy to find our way amongst all the complexional varieties of our nature, to its radical and pervading ungodliness; and thus to carry the acquiescence of the judgment in some extended demonstration about the utter sinfulness of the species. But it is not so easy to point this demonstration towards the bosom of any individual,—to gather it up, as it were, from its state of diffusion over the whole field of humanity, and send it, with all its energies concentered to a single heart, in the form of a sharp, and humbling, and terrifying conviction,—to make it enter the conscience of some one listener, like an arrow sticking fast,—or, when the appalling picture of a whole world lying in wickedness, is thus presented to the understanding of a general audience, to make each of that audience mourn apart over his own wickedness; just as when, on the day of judgment, though all that is visible be shaking, and dissolving, and giving way, each despairing eye-witness shall mourn apart over the recollection of his own guilt, over the prospect of his own rueful and undone eternity. And yet, if this be not done, no thing is done. The lesson of the text has come to you in word only and not in power. To look to the truth in its generality, is one thing; to look to your own separate concern in it, is another. What we want is that each of you shall turn his eye homewards; that each shall purify his own heart from the influence of a delusion which we pronounce to be ruinous; that each shall beware of leaning a satisfaction, or a triumph, on the comparison of himself with corrupt and exiled men, whom sin has degraded into outcasts from the presence of God, and the joys of paradise; that each of you shall look to the measure of God's law, so that when the commandment comes upon you, in the sense of its exceeding broadness, a sense of your sin, and of your death in sin, may come along with it. "Without the commandment I was alive," says

the Apostle; "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Be assured, that if the utterance of such truth in your hearing, impress no personal earnestness, and lead to no personal measures, and be followed up by no personal movements, then to you it is as a sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. The preacher has been beating the air. That great Agent, whose revealed office it is to convince of sin, has refused to go along with him. Another influence altogether, than that which is salutary and saving, has been sent into your bosom; and the glow of the truth universal has deafened or intercepted the application of the truth personal, and of the truth particular.

This leads us to the second thing proposed in our last discourse, under which we shall attempt to explain the wisdom opposite to that folly of measuring ourselves by ourselves, and comparing ourselves among ourselves, which we have already attempted to expose.

The first step is to give up all satisfaction with yourselves, on the bare ground, that your conduct comes up to the measure of human character, and human reputation around you. This consideration may be of importance to your place in society; but, as to your place in the favour of God, it is utterly insignificant. The moral differences which obtain in a community of exiles, are all quite consistent with the entire obliteration amongst them, of the allegiance that is due to the government of their native land. And the moral differences which obtain in the world, may, in every way, be as consistent with the fact, that one and all of us, in our state of nature, are alienated from God by wicked works. And, in like manner, as convicts may be all alive to a sense of their reciprocal obligations, while dead, in feeling and in principle, to the supreme obligation under which they lie to the sovereign,—so may we, in reference to our fellow-men, have a sense of rectitude, and honour, and compassion, while, in reference to God, we may labour under the entire extinction of every moral sensibility,—so that the virtues which signalize us, may, in the language of some of our old divines, be neither more nor less than splendid sins. With the possession of these virtues, we may not merely be incurring every day the guilt of trespassing and sinning against our

Maker in heaven; but devoid, as we are, of all apprehension of the enormity of this, we may strikingly realize the assertion of the Bible, that we are *dead* in trespasses and sins. And we pass our time in all the tranquillity of death. We say peace, when there is no peace. Though in a state of disruption from God, we live as securely and as inconsiderately as if there were no question and no controversy betwixt us. About this whole matter, there is within us, a spirit of heaviness and of deep slumber. We lie fast asleep on the brink of an unprovided eternity,—and, if possible to awaken you, let us urge you to compare, not your own conduct with that of acquaintances and neighbours, but to compare your own finding of the ungodliness that is in your heart with the doctrine of God's word about it,—to bring down the loftiness of your spirit to its humbling declarations—to receive it as a faithful saying, that man is lost by nature, and that unless there be some mighty transition, in his history, from a state of nature to a state of salvation, the wrath of God abideth on him.

The next inquiry comes to be, What is this transition? Tell me the step I should take, and I will take it. It is not enough, then, that you exalt upon your own person the degree of those virtues, by which you have obtained a credit and a distinction among men. It is not enough, that you throw a brighter and a lovelier hue over your social accomplishments. It is not enough, that you multiply the offerings of your charity, or observe a more rigid compliance, than heretofore, with all the requisitions of justice. All this you may do, and yet the great ponit, on which your controversy with God essentially hinges, may not be so much as entered upon. All this you may do, and yet obtain no nearer approximation to Him who sitteth on the throne, than the outlaws of an offended government for their fidelities to each other.

To the eye of man you may be fairer than before, and in civil estimation be greatly more righteous than before,—and yet, with the unquelled spirit of impiety within you, and as habitual an indifference as ever to all the subordinating claims of the divine will over your heart and your conduct, you may stand at as wide a distance from God as before. And besides, how

are we to dispose of the whole guilt of your past iniquities? Whether, is it the malefactor or the Lawgiver who is to arbitrate this question? God may remit our sins but it is for him to proclaim this. God may pass them over; but it is for him to issue the deed of amnesty. God may have found out a way whereby, in consistency with his own character, and with the stability of his august government, he may take sinners into reconciliation; but it is for him both to devise and to publish this way;—and we must just do what convicts do; when they obtain a mitigation or a cancelment of the legal sentence under which they lie,—we must passively accept of it, on the terms of the deed,—we must look to the warrant as issued by the sovereign, and take the boon or fulfil the conditions, just as it is there presented to us. The question is between us and God; and, in the adjustment of this question, we must look singly to the expression of his will, and feel that it is with him, and with his authority, that we have exclusively to do. In one word, we must wait his own revelation, and learn from his own mouth how it is that he would have us to come nigh unto him.

Let us go then to the record. "No man cometh unto the Father but through the Son." "There is no other name given under heaven, but the name of Jesus, whereby we can be saved." "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin;" and "God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." "He was once offered to bear the sins of many,—and "became sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing unto them their trespasses." "Justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord;"—"and we become the children of God, through the faith that is in Christ Jesus." we are "reconciled to God by the death of his Son,"—"and by his obedience are many made righteous,"—and "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." These verses sound foolishness to many; but the cross of Christ is foolishness to those that perish. They appear to them invested with all the mysteriousness of a dark and hidden saying; but if this Gospel be hid, it is hid to them which are lost. They have eyes that

they cannot see the wondrous things contained in this book of God's communication; but they have minds which believe not, because they are blinded by the god of this world, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them.

And here we cannot but insist on the utter hopelessness of their circumstances, who hear these overtures of reconciliation, but will not listen to them. Theirs is just the case of rebels turning their back on a deed of grace and of amnesty. We are quite confident in stating it to be the stubborn experience of human nature, that all who reject Christ, as he is offered in the Gospel, persist in that radical ungodliness of character on which the condemnation of our world mainly and essentially rests. And as they thus refuse to build their security on the foundation of his merits,—what, we would ask, is the other foundation on which they build it? If ever they think seriously of the matter, or feel any concern about a foundation on which they might rest their confidence before God, they conceive it to lie in such feelings, and such humanities, and such honesties, as make them even with the world, or as elevate them to a certain degree above the level of the world's population. These are the materials of the foundation on which they build. It is upon the possession of virtues which in truth have not God for their object, that they propose to support in the presence of God the attitude of fearlessness. It is upon the testimony of fellow-rebels that they brave the judgment of the Being who has pronounced of them all, that they have deeply revolted against him. And all this in the face of God's high prerogative, to make and to publish his own overtures. All this in contempt of that Mediator, whom he has appointed. All this in resistance to the authentic deed of grace and of forgiveness, which has been sent to our world, and from which we gather the full assurance of God's willingness to be reconciled; but, at the same time, are expressly bound down to that particular way in which he hath chosen to dispense reconciliation. Who does not see, that, in these circumstances, the guilt of sin is fearfully aggravated on the part of sinners, by their rejection of the Gospel? Who does not see, that thus to refuse the grant of everlasting life in

the terms of the grant, is just to set an irretrievable seal upon their own condemnation? Who does not see, that, in the act of declining to take the shelter which is held out to them, they vainly imagine, that God will let down his approbation, to such performances as are utterly devoid of any spirit of devout or dutiful allegiance to the Lawgiver? This is, in fact, a deliberate posting of themselves, and that more firmly and more obstinately than ever, on the ground of their rebellion—and let us no longer wonder, then, at the terms of that alternative of which we read so often in the Bible. We there read, that if we believe we shall be saved; but we also read, that if we believe not, we shall be damned. We are there told of the great salvation; but how shall we escape if we neglect it? We are there invited to lay hold of the Gospel, as the savour of life unto life: but, if we refuse the invitation, it shall be to us the savour of death unto death. The gospel is there freely proclaimed to us, for our acceptance: but if we will not obey the Gospel, we shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Saviour's power. We are asked to kiss the Son while he is in the way; but if we do not, the alternative is that he will be angry, and that his wrath will burn against us. He is revealed to us a sure rock, on which, if we lean we shall not be confounded: but if we shift our dependence away from it, it will fall upon us and grind us to powder.

And this alternative, so far from a matter to be wondered at, appears resolvable into a principle that might be easily comprehended. God is the party sinned against: and if he have the will to be reconciled, it is surely for him to prescribe the way of it: and this he has actually done in the revelation of the New Testament: and whether he give a reason for the way or not, certain it is, that in order to give it accomplishment, he sent his eternal Son into our world; and this descent was accompanied with such circumstances of humiliation, and conflict, and deep suffering that heaven looked on with astonishment, and earth was bidden to rejoice, because of her great salvation. It is enough for us to know that God lavished on this plan the riches of a wisdom that is unsearchable; that, in the hearing of sinful men, he has proclaimed its importance and its efficacy;

that every Gospel messenger felt himself charged, with tidings pregnant of joy, and of mighty deliverance to the world. And we ask you just to conceive, in these circumstances, what effect it should have on the mind of the insulted Sovereign, if the world, instead of responding, with grateful and delighted welcome, to the message, shall either nauseate its terms, or, feeling in them no significancy, shall turn with indifference away from it? Are we at all to wonder if the King, very wroth with the men of such a world shall at length send his armies to destroy it? Do you think it likely that the same God, who after we had broken his commandment, was willing to pass by our transgressions, will be equally willing to pass them by, after we have thus despised the proclamation of his mercy; after his forbearance and his long-suffering have been resisted; and that scheme of pardon, with the weight and the magnitude of which angels appear to labour in amazement, is received by the very men for whom it was devised, as a thing of no estimation? Surely, if there had been justice in the simple and immediate punishment of sin—this justice will be discharged in still brighter manifestation on him, who, in the face of such an embassy, holds out in his determination to brave it. And, if it be a righteous thing in God to avenge every violation of his law, how clearly and how irresistibly righteous will it appear, when, on the great day of his wrath, he taketh vengeance on those who have added to the violation of his law, the rejection of the Gospel!

But what is more than this—God hath condescended to make known to us a reason, for that peculiar way of reconciliation, which he hath set before us. It is that he might be just while the justifier of those who believe in Jesus. In the dispensation of his mercy, he had to provide for the dignity of his throne. He had to guard the stability of his truth and of his righteousness. He had to pour the lustre of a high and awful vindication, over the attributes of a nature that is holy and unchangeable. He had to make peace on earth and good will to men meet and be at one, with glory to God in the highest; and for this purpose did the eternal Son pour out his soul an offering for sin, and by his obedience unto death, bring in an everlast-

ing righteousness. It is through the channel of this great expiation that the guilt of every believer is washed away; and it is through the imputed merits of him with whom the Father was well pleased, that every believer is admitted to the rewards of a perfect obedience. Conceive any man of this world to reject the offers of reward and forgiveness in this way, and to look for them in another. Conceive him to challenge the direct approbation of his Judge, on the measure of his own worth, and his own performances, and to put away from him that righteousness of Christ, in the measure of which there is no short coming. Is he not, by this attitude, holding out against God, and that too, on a question in which the justice of God stands committed against him? Is not the poor sinner of a day entering into a fearful controversy, with all the plans, and all the perfections of the Eternal? Might not you conceive every attribute of the Divinity, gathering into a frown of deeper indignation against the daringness of him, who thus demands the favour of the Almighty on some plea of his own, and resolutely declines it on that only plea, under which the acceptance of the sinner can be in harmony with the glories of God's holy and inviolable character? Surely, if we have fallen short of the obedience of his law and so short as to have renounced altogether that godliness which imparts to obedience its spiritual and substantial quality, —then do we aggravate the enormity of our sin, by building our hope before God on a foundation of sin? To sin is to defy God? but the very presumption that he will smile complacency upon it, involves in it another, and a still more deliberate attack upon his government; and all its sanctions, and all its severities, are let loose upon us in greater force and abundance than before, if we either rest upon our own virtue, or mix up this polluted ingredient with the righteousness of Christ, and refuse our single, entire, and undivided reliance on him, who alone has magnified the law and made it honourable.

But such, if we may be allowed the expression, is the constitution of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that, in proportion to the terror which it holds out to those who neglect it, is the security that it provides to all, who flee for refuge to the hope which is set before them. Paul understood this well, when, though he

profited over many of his equals in his own nation,—when though had he measured himself by them, he might have gathered from the comparison a feeling of proud superiority,—when though in all that was counted righteous amongst his fellows, he signalized himself in general estimation,—yet he willingly renounced a dependence upon all, that he might win Christ, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness which was of the law, but that righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith. He felt the force of the alternative, between the former and the latter righteousness. He knew that the one admitted of no measurement with the other; and that whatever appearance of worth it had in the eyes of men, when brought to their relative and earthly standard, it was reduced to nothing, and worse than nothing, when brought to the standard of Heaven's holy and unalterable law. Jesus Christ has in our nature fulfilled this law; and it is in the righteousness which he thus wrought, that we are invited to stand before God. You do not then take in a full impression of Gospel security, if you only believe that God is merciful, and has forgiven you. You are called farther to believe, that God is righteous, and has justified you. You have a warrant to put on the righteousness of Christ as a robe and as a diadem, and to go to the throne of grace with the petition of Look upon me in the face of him who hath fulfilled all righteousness. You are furnished with such a measure of righteousness as God can accept, without letting down a single attribute which belongs to him. The truth, and the justice, and the holiness, which stand in such threatening array against the sinner who is out of Christ, now form into a shield and a hiding-place around him. And while he who trusts in the general mercy of God does so at the expense of his whole character, he who trusts in the mercy of God, which hath appeared unto all men through the Saviour, offers in that act of confidence an homage to every perfection of the Divinity, and has every perfection of the Divinity upon his side. And thus it is, that under the economy of redemption, we now read, not merely of God being merciful, but of God being just and faithful in forgiving our sins, and in cleansing us from all our unrighteousness.

Thus much for what may be called the *judicial righteousness*, with which every believer is invested by having the merits of Christ imputed to him through faith. But this faith is something more than a name. It takes up a positive residence in the mind as a principle. It has locality and operation there, and has either no existence at all, or by its purifying and reforming influence on the holder of it, does it invest him also with a personal righteousness.

Now, to apply the conception of our text to this personal righteousness, the first thing we would say of it is, that it admits of no measurement whatever with the social worth, or the moral virtue, or any other of the personal accomplishments of character, which may belong to those who have not the faith of the Gospel. Faith accepts of the offered reconciliation, and moves away from the alienated heart those suspicions, and aversions, and fears, which kept man asunder from his God. We would not say, then, of the personal righteousness of a believer, that it consisted in a higher degree of that virtue which may exist in a lower degree with him who is not a believer. It consists in the dawn, and the progress, and the perfecting of a virtue, which, before he was a believer, had no existence whatever. It consists in the possession of a character of which, previous to his acceptance of Christ, he had not the smallest feature of reality; though to the external eye, there may have been some features of resemblance. The principle of Christian sanctification, which, if we were to express it by another name, we would call devotedness to God, is no more to be found in the unbelieving world, than the principle of an allegiance to their rightful sovereign, is to be found among the outcasts of banishment. It is not by any stretching out of the measure of your former virtues, then, that you can attain this principle. There needs to be originated within you a new virtue altogether. It is not by the fostering of that which is old,—it is by the creation of something new, that a man comes to have the personal righteousness of a disciple of the New Testament. It is by giving existence to that which formerly had no existence. And let us no longer wonder, then, at the magnitude of the terms which are employed in the Bible, to denote the change, the personal

change, which in point of character, and affection, and principle, takes place on all who become meet for the inheritance of the saints. It is there called life from the dead, and a new birth, and a total renovation,—all old things are said to be done away, and all things to become new. With many it is a wonder how a change of such totality and of such magnitude, should be accounted as indispensable to the good and creditable man of society, as to the sunken profligate. But if the one and the other are both dead to a sense of their Lawgiver in heaven,—then both need to be made alive unto him. With both there must be the power and the reality of a spiritual resurrection. And after this great transition has been made, it will be found that the virtues of the new state, and those of the old state, cannot be brought to any common standard of measurement at all. The one distances the other by a wide and impassable interval. There is all the difference in point of principle between a man of the world and a new creature in Christ, that there is between him who has the Spirit of God, and him who has it not,—and all the difference in point of performance, that there is between him who is without Christ, and can therefore do nothing, and him who can do all things through Christ strengthening him. There is a new principle now, which formerly had no operation, even that of godliness,—and a new influence now, even that of the Holy Ghost, given to the prayers of the believer;—and under these provisions will he attain a splendour and an energy of character, with which, the better and the best of this world can no more be brought into comparison, than earth will compare with heaven, or the passions and the frivolities of time, with the pure ambition and the lofty principles of eternity.

And let it not be said, that the transformation of which we are now speaking, instead of being thus entire and universal, consists only with a good man of the world in the addition of one virtue, to his previous stock of many virtues. We admit that he had justice before, and humanity before, and courteouness before, and that the godliness which he had not before, is only one virtue. But the station which it asserts, among the other virtues, is a station of supreme authority. It no sooner takes

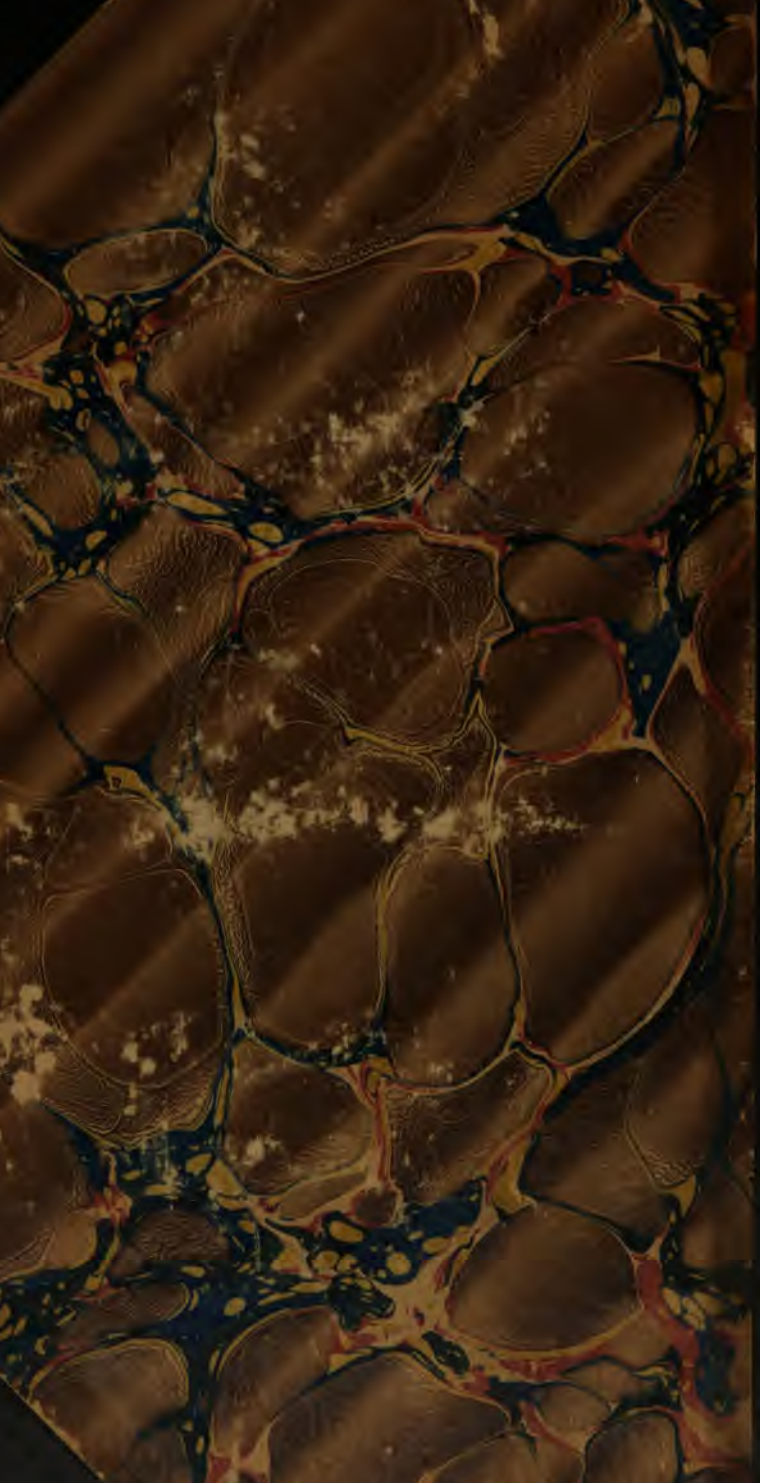
its place among them, than it animates them all, and subordinates them all. It sends forth among them a new and pervading quality, which makes them essentially different from what they were before. I may take daily exercise from a regard to my health, and by so doing I may deserve the character of a man of prudence; or I may take daily exercise apart from this consideration altogether, and because it is the accidental wish of my parents that I should do so; and thus may I deserve the character of a man of filial piety. The external habit is the same; but under the one principle, the moral character of this habit is totally and essentially different from what it is under the other principle. Yet the difference here, is, most assuredly, not greater than is the difference between the justice of a good man of society, and the justice of a Christian disciple. In the former case, it is done unto others, or done unto himself. In the latter case, it is done unto God. The frame-work of his outer doings is animated by another spirit altogether. There is the breath of another life in it. The inscription of Holiness to God stands engraven on the action of the believer; and if this character of holiness be utterly effaced from the corresponding action of the good man of society, then, surely, in character, in worth, in spiritual and intelligent estimation, there is the utmost possible diversity between the two actions. So that, should the most upright and amiable man upon earth embrace the Gospel faith, and become the subject of the Gospel regeneration,—it is true of him, too, that all old things are done away, and that all things have become new.

Thus it is, that while none of the Christian virtues can be made to come into measurement with any of what may be called the constitutional virtues, in respect of their principle, because the principle of the one set differs from that of the other set, in kind as well as in degree, yet there are certain corresponding virtues in each of the classes, which might be brought together into measurement, in respect of visible and external performance. And it is a high point of obligation with every disciple of the faith, so to sustain his part in this competition, as to show forth the honour of Christianity; to prove by his own personal history in the world, how much the morality of grace outstrips

the morality of nature; to evince the superior lustre and steadiness of the one, when compared with the frail, and fluctuating, and desultory character of the other; and to make it clear to the eye of experience, that it is only under the peculiar government of the doctrine of Christ, that all which is amiable in human worth, becomes most lovely, and all which is justly held in human admiration, becomes most great, and lofty, and venerable. The Bible tells us to provide things honest in the sight of men, as well as of God. It tells us, that upon the person of every Christian, the features of excellence should stand so legibly engraven, that, as a living epistle, he might be seen and read of all men. It is true, there is much in the character of a genuine believer which the world cannot see, and cannot sympathize with. There is the rapture of faith, when in lively exercise. There is the ecstacy of devotion. There is a calm and settled serenity amid all the vicissitudes of life. There is the habit of having no confidence in the flesh, and of rejoicing in the Lord Jesus. There is a holding fast of our hope in the promises of the Gospel. There is a cherishing of the Spirit of adoption. There is the work of a believing fellowship with the Father and with the Son. There is a movement of affection towards the things which are above. There is a building up of ourselves on our most holy faith. There is a praying in the Holy Ghost. There is a watching for his influence with all perseverance. In a word, there is all which the Christian knows to be real, and which the world hates, and denounces as visionary, in the secret, but sublime and substantial processes of experimental religion.

But, on the other hand, there is also much in the doings of an altogether Christian of that palpable virtue which forces itself upon general observation; and he is most grievously untrue to his Master's cause, if he do not, on this ground, so outrun the world, as to force from the men of it, an approving testimony. The eye of the world cannot enter within the spiritual recesses of his heart; but let him ever remember that it is fastened, and that too with keen and scrutinizing jealousy on the path of his visible history. It will offer no homage to the mere sanctity of his complexion; nor, unless there be shed over it,

the expression of what is mild in domestic, or honourable in public virtue, will it ever look upon him in any other light, than as an object of the most unmingled disgust. And therefore it is, that he must enter on the field of ostensible accomplishment, and there bear away the palm of superiority, and be the most eminent of his fellows in all those recognized virtues, that can bless or embellish the condition of society; the most untainted in honour, and the most disinterested in justice, and the most alert in beneficence, and the most unwearied in all these graces, under every discouragement and every provocation.

We have now only time to say, that we shall not regret the length of this discourse, or even the recurrence of some of its arguments, if any hearer amongst you, not in the faith, be led by it, to withdraw his confidence from the mere accomplishments of nature,—and if any believer amongst you be led by it not to despise these accomplishments, but to put them on, and to animate them all with the spirit of religiousness,—if any hearer amongst you, beginning to perceive his own nothingness in the sight of God, be prompted to inquire, Wherewithal shall I appear before him? and not to rest from the inquiry, till he flee from his hiding-place, to that everlasting righteousness which the Saviour hath brought in; and if any believer amongst you, rightly dividing the word of truth, shall act on the principle, that though nothing but the doctrine of Christ crucified, can avail him for acceptance with God, yet he is bound to adorn this doctrine in all things. And knowing that one may acquiesce in the whole of such a demonstration, without carrying it personally home, we leave off with the single remark, that every conviction not prosecuted, every movement of conscience not followed up, every ray of light or of truth not turned to individual application, will aggravate the reckoning of the great day,—and, that in proportion to the degree of urgency which has been brought to bear upon you, and been resisted, will be the weight and the justness of your final condemnation.

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